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The
SUN HAWK

THE SUN HAWK

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

AUTHOR of

"The Drums of Aulone," "Cardigan," "Ailsa Page," "The
Flaming Jewel," "The Laughing Girl," "The Little
Red Foot," "The Man They Hanged," "The
Talkers," "The Slayer of Souls," etc.



A. L. BURT COMPANY
Publishers New York

Published by arrangement with D. Appleton and Company

Printed in U. S. A.

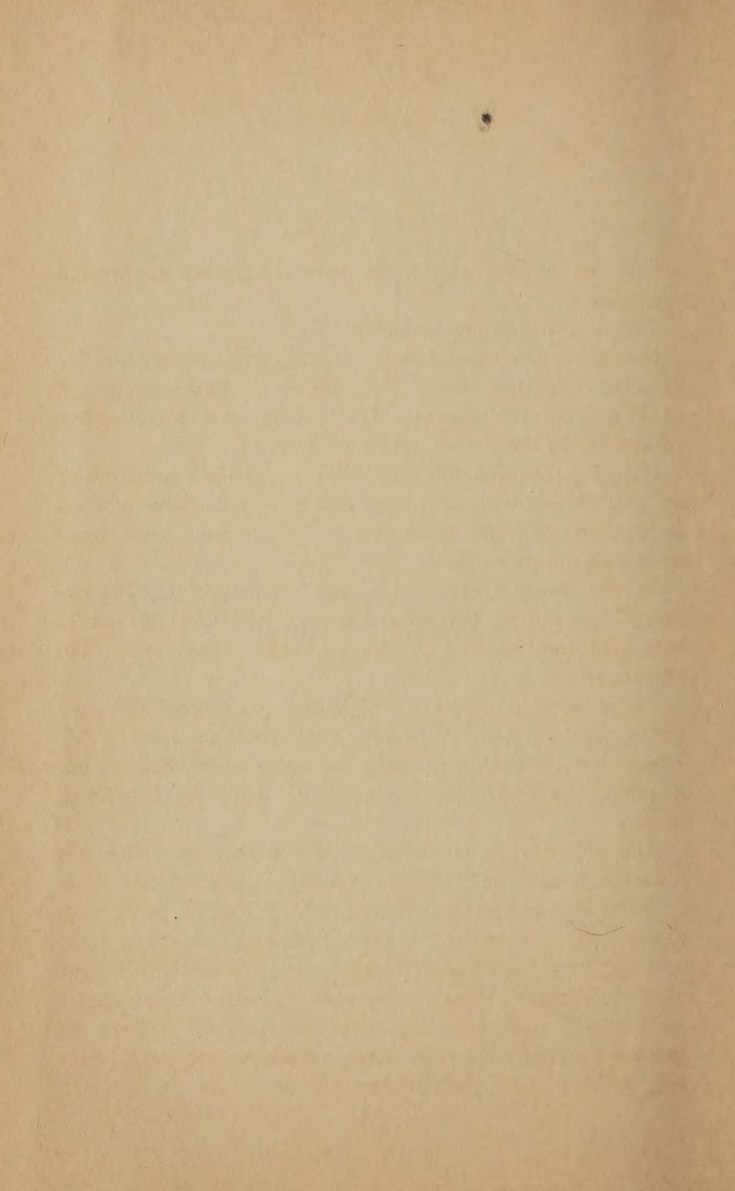
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To

THE HON. PHŒNIX INGRAHAM

A RARE SCHOLAR, A LEARNED ANTIQUARIAN
AND A VALUED FRIEND



AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The history involved in this story is as exact as research can make it.

The fiction does not violate it.

Memoirs and chronicles of contemporaries, as usual, differ in dates, localities, and in the spelling of geographical and of French proper names. That orthography which seems reasonable to the author has been selected.

It will be remembered that this is a personal narrative of an Englishman who interprets history and analyzes motives as his own eyes and reason dictate. There are always many sides to all arguments.

In this story, where Indian words are used, the orthography may not be beyond criticism. The difficulty lies in this, that the Indians of North America had no written language.

Those who employed the alphabet to interpret the phonetics of these various Indian languages and dialects differed. The Englishman wrote the words as his English ear dictated; the Frenchman wrote in his way; the Dutchman in his.

The orthography employed by the author generally follows the spelling of the Jesuit Fathers, but not always.

Those devoted missionaries of the Society of Jesus were as scholarly as they were brave. Educated, cultivated, made sensitive by a life of self-denial, it seems probable that their ears were more delicately attuned and their minds more spiritually receptive to the harmonies and dissonances of unknown tongues than were the perceptive senses of English soldiers and Dutch traders.

Yet, even the Jesuits did not always agree concerning the spelling of Huron, Iroquois, and Algonquin words.

So perhaps the author may be forgiven phonetic and interpretative mistakes.

THE SUN HAWK

*"Now there are known to be
Three kinds of Souls: the White,
Which ever sits a-mewing at
Peter's feet; the Black, prowling
And howling through Hell; and
The Red Soul which rides
The tempest, thundering
On through Death and Eternity
Toward the Unknown End of All."*

Chapter I

THEIR horses had broken loose and were running among the lemon trees.

Shells fell and burst, scattering liquid fire which spilled over everything.

A mulberry grove, drenched with it, the trees in heavy leaf, shriveled and burst into flame, lighting up the lemon and orange groves through which frightened cavalry horses ran in every direction.

A splendid horse, bridled and saddled, passed near me dragging a dead groom whose lifeless hand still clutched the snaffle. I caught the horse and tore loose the dead man's fingers.

Close in shore lay the Turkish ships, looming redly and vast in the blaze of their own broadsides.

Through the lurid light French troopers were running from their tents which had caught fire—some naked, some in shirt and jack-boots striving to buckle on sword and body armour as they ran—all shouting and hallooing after their horses.

Then I saw *him*.

He came sauntering out of flame-shot darkness, fully dressed in his uniform of *maréchal de camp*, wearing steel corselet, spurred boots and three-cornered plumed hat deeply bound with gold.

A lump of Greek fire brushed his plumes and set them aflame, and they fell in ashy flakes around his face. He cursed everything and everybody, calmly, yet I saw a trace of froth at the corners of his lion-like mouth; and his lion's eyes had become a steady golden glare.

"Where is my cousin de Palladine?" he called out. "If he isn't dead he should be here! Palladine! Where the devil are you?"

That is the first time ever I laid eyes upon the most violent, the most fiery, the most stubborn, and the most lovable man on earth—there in that awful rain of Greek fire, amid flames from burning fruit trees, the crashing Turkish cannon, the rush of terrified horses and of yelling men.

Suddenly his calm gave way to fury:

"Damnation and the pox of Venice!" he roared; "a hundred lashes to every scoundrel who shall not catch his horse and saddle him! A hundred extra to every man who slept naked against orders! May ten thousand Turkish imps torment you— What have I here—an army or a herd of devil-driven swine?"

Seeing me he bellowed at me: "Who are you who have caught my horse for me! By the bushy golden beard of God Almighty here is a boy who plays the man when grown men lose their wits!"

With a bound like an enraged animal he sprang upon his saddle while the frantic horse was rearing and kicking in the pelting stream of sparks.

"Palladine!" he shouted; "are you dead then? *Nom de Dieu à moi!*"

Many of the French cavalymen were catching their horses, now, and climbing into their saddles; far away in darkness on our right the noise of musketry broke out from French infantry. The cavalry, however, had caught their horses only for the purpose of flight; but my terrible Count Frontenac, still cursing, roaring, his mouth foaming like a beast's, menaced them with drawn pistol and drove them into a huddling body as they attempted to gallop past.

"Clarions and kettledrums at the head!" he bellowed, riding everywhere and striking everybody like a madman; and hustling a few terror-stricken kettledrummers and trumpeters

into a sort of squad. "Now, you damned swine, sound my march! Sound out the Basque's March! Gaily, by God!—gaily!"

As the brigade's marching music pierced thinly through the dreadful uproar, a Turkish ship close inshore let go a broadside, and, in the awful glare, we caught a glimpse of the wagons of the camp followers where women, children, horses and equipages were being blown to bits under the storm of iron.

"Steady! Courage! Dress your squadrons there!" bawled Frontenac. "This is war! What did you expect when you enlisted? Battledore and a fête champêtre?" He drew his long, heavy, straight sword and put himself at the head of the cavalry.

"March!" he thundered, "and keep your ranks, or I'll hold you here till you're blown to atoms!"

I saw the white-faced troopers ride slowly by, their ghastly gaze striving to pierce the fiery obscurity where their wives, children, and mistresses were agonizing in the flames and wreckage of the baggage train.

Frontenac was demanding at the top of his voice: "Has anybody seen my cousin the Colonel of Gendarmerie de Paladine?"

Somebody shouted: "The gendarmes have been overwhelmed and massacred to the last man!"

A regiment of Venetian infantry in disorderly retreat came streaming through the darkness.

"Ha!" cried Frontenac ironically, "sons of the sea-bride flee the sea when the crescent moon rides high! Now, by the red head of Louis, my King, why shall we Frenchmen fight the Turk to please Venice when every damned gondolier runs like a rabbit at the first gunshot!"

His swift, sarcastic eye caught sight of me as he rode past the burning tents:

"You English lad, catch my stirrup and hang on! The

game is finished! The Venetian guard-ships have betrayed me! Cut the tail off Doge and you have *dog*! This is the end of Doge and dog alike! To hell with all republics!"

I caught his stirrup-leather and ran beside him as the cavalry, clarions and kettledrums, playing a feeble march, slowly rode out into the rolling country.

Above us massed mountains loomed black against the stars, and I could see distant lights glimmering on the great Venetian fortress and the torches of two retreating armies flickering for miles and miles over the uplands around us.

Behind us all along the coast the camps of the French and Venetian troops were on fire. Beyond, the flashes of the Turkish cannon made a continuous red flare. Boats from their ships already were landing; the ruddy darkness was filled with an infernal tumult,—shots, screams, shouting, the crash of falling roofs and walls, the uproar from the Venetian army which had given way and was in full flight toward the mountains.

Now Count Frontenac halted the cavalry on a fertile hillside and faced them about. I still held his stirrup.

Officers of his entourage began to arrive; officers from other French regiments which had not been broken appeared out of the darkness and galloped up, hat in hand, to ask for instructions in the face of this great and final disaster.

I let go Count Frontenac's stirrup and stood aside. The Count had become cool, now, polite, good humoured.

He understood perfectly that the two-year siege of the island had ended; that the Turk now clutched Candia and presently must utterly overwhelm it; that the sway of Venice in Crete was over; and that his own French army had better get aboard its ships and sail back to France as soon as might be.

I heard him say to the noble colonel of a French infantry regiment:

"I love my wife but she doesn't love me; we quarrel fright-

fully and I am unfaithful to her whenever I have an opportunity. But this tribute I pay her: Madame de Frontenac is not only the most beautiful and charming and witty woman in France, but she also is the wisest. And if I had listened to her I never would have brought this army into Candia to help Venice drive away the Turk who, by God, is the better man!"

He began to laugh and slapped his thighs as he sat his saddle.

"The Turk? He's killed my cousin, Colonel Count de Palladine! But the Turk is not a bad fellow! No. He has plenty of courage. Yes. And there are admirable points about his religion, too. Everybody, it seems, has a harem in the Turk heaven. . . . That's to be considered, too! And admired. Yes!"

He roared with laughter, and, still laughing, gave orders to one officer after another; sent away one aide-de-camp after another; read despatches by the flicker of a smoky torch; hummed or whistled a gay air now and then.

"Well, then," said he—his careless good humour masking an icy rage—"Venice flees, so why the devil should we Frenchmen remain here to amuse the Turk in this pretty land of figs and grapes and oranges and silkworms? . . . And Doges and dogs!

"For me, I have business in a merrier country which is my own land of France, and my own estate of Isle Savary; and I had rather go home and continue the war with my wife than sit here until some Turk cuts off my head and sticks it upon a stake for the convenience of dirty birds. Probably that is what they have done to my cousin Palladine."

He rode out of the circle of his officers and looked up toward the great fortress—the last stronghold of Venice in Crete; and all his officers, sitting their restive horses, looked up, too, although in the darkness nothing upon the mountains

was visible except battle-lanterns blazing like low-hanging stars.

In a distinct but pleasant voice Count de Frontenac swore by the armoured archangel of golden-bearded God that were this King Louis' war, and not a petty Venetian quarrel, he would enter into yonder fortress and never budge for anybody till the battlements rotted on every bastion.

As he spoke, half a mile away, between us and the sea, musketry crashed out between the infantry of our rear-guard and landing parties from the Turkish fleet.

Officers from the rear—which now, for the moment, had become our front—continued to arrive ahorse and afoot in all stages of dishevelment; some bootless, running along and pulling up their garterless stockings; some with flapping buff-coat open over shirtless bodies; some all bloody, or scarred raw from Greek fire; others fierce, ragged, powder-blackened, clutching halberds or the reddened stumps of swords. But they all wore their moustaches twisted up with the jaunty, victorious air of conquerors, and I even saw one young nobleman ride up on a wounded horse, carrying a green silk flag surmounted by a battered silver crescent.

Frontenac's leonine visage relaxed and he began to laugh.

"Banner taken by my own Regiment of Normandie!" he said, with a mocking glance at the officers of other regiments around him. "Poor Navarre! Poor gendarmes! Poor, poor Palladine!"

At that there was a stirring and a growling, and the noise of swords unsheathing all around us in the dark. But Frontenac said: "No! We go home."

Then he stood up in his stirrups and looked around him, rising to full, majestic height like a lion on a lofty rock.

He knew and we knew that at sunrise the Venetian drummers on the fortress would beat a parley. And that would be the end.

Standing there in his stirrups, Count Frontenac swore. He

cursed Venice and the Venetians who had come whining to Versailles—or rather to St. Germain—for aid against the infidel; he cursed terribly because Louis the Fourteenth had deigned to listen to them; he swore horribly because Turenne had selected him and a sturdy little army to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for such poltroons as the Venetians.

“And now, by the golden beard of God Almighty, we go home!” he roared. “And I can find more honest fighting to amuse me in my own home than I can in this land of silkworms and poltroons! . . . Fetch my tablets, my ink-horn, and a light!”

Amid a ring of torches he wrote his orders; couriers and aides-de-camp galloped away in every direction, with the sheets of paper still wet.

He said to officers of artillery: “Bring off every gun! And if you forget any then you shall go back and bring them off though the Turk truss you all on pointed staves!”

He said to officers of the Regiment of Normandie:

“If our baggage burns, then it must burn, but bring on all children and every woman whom you discover alive—even to the last painted trull!”

There arrived from our left wing, at the moment, a disorderly cavalcade of Venetian officers seeking orders and news—for Count Frontenac was acting generalissimo—but they knew, as he knew, that his rotten left crutch had broken under him and he must hobble, now, only with the right.

He took off his gilded hat, with its shrivelled stumps of plumes, and swept the Venetian noblemen a very low and insolent bow.

“Gentlemen,” he purred, his lion-eyes two slits of flame, “you are arrived but just in time at this council of war. I propose to hurl this allied army on the Turk—every drummer boy, every camp-drab’s brat—horse, foot, artillery, baggage, goats, silkworms and fleas! And how does that strike you, gentlemen of Venice?”

For a full minute only the racket of musketry and the distant booming of Turkish guns broke the silence.

"Well," said Count Frontenac pleasantly, "I listen to the Bride of the Sea. Let Venetia speak. She, at least, is always eloquent."

They did not understand his irony. A heavy gentleman in half armour, all over gold and lace, took off his plumed hat. He was commandant of the great fortress, and he said that he regretted he could not stand siege.

"I said nothing about a siege; I spoke of hurling these allied armies upon the Turk," retorted Frontenac coldly.

Several officers took off their hats at the same time, and all seemed in a hurry to assure Count Frontenac that the Venetian troops would no longer fight.

Frontenac burst into a loud laugh.

"Well, then, gentlemen," said he, "I leave you to entertain your Oriental guests with the kind of eloquence and military music which you so thoroughly understand. As for me, gentlemen, my cannon are more eloquent than I am; and I have no drummers who know how to beat a parley, and no clarions who know how to sound a truce. And, gentlemen of Venice, if there be among you any officers of noble birth who might desire further musical information from me, I shall await any such aspirants one week aboard ship before I sail. . . . After that the deluge!"

A moment's stupefied silence followed the insult; then a Venetian nobleman, his handsome features dark with rage, pushed his horse against Frontenac's and lifted his steel glove to strike him.

At that instant there came a crash and a blinding glare above us, deafening and partly stunning everybody. Men and horses staggered and fell; the Venetian officer collapsed in his saddle and his bloody horse reared and fell backward upon him.

I caught Count Frontenac's horse by the head; his rider

had fallen forward; but now he straightened in his saddle, and I saw that his left arm hung twisted and broken, and his features ran blood.

He wiped his face with the lace of his right sleeve. The Venetian officers were riding off in a hurry. He sat his saddle, his visage and chest bathed in a dozen crimson streams.

"A Turkish bath, gentlemen," he gasped; and the ironic smile lifted the leonine moustache in a slight snarl.

"Gentlemen," he added calmly, "be good enough to rejoin your regiments. My military family will follow me. As for you," he added, looking down at me, "help me pass a scarf to prop up this damaged wing—"

I freed a Red Dragoon's horse from the bridle grasp of his dead master sprawling on the ground, mounted, and came alongside of Frontenac. Then, from my saddle, I unbound my body scarf of scarlet and passed it over Count Frontenac's shoulder and breast to make a sling.

"Merci, Monsieur," he growled, white with pain under his mask of blood.

He rode slowly forward through lurid darkness. We followed.

Chapter II

THERE rode beside me a boy in silk and half armour, his dark hair veiling his bent head and falling in curls upon his steel clavicles.

Ribbons fluttered from both shoulders; a gold neck-chain swung with every step of his horse. He seemed overwhelmed with shame and grief.

I said to him in a low voice: "Courage, Monsieur; men die, but liberty, though in chains, remains immortal."

He lifted his handsome young head and looked around at me. Our gaze met in the red flicker of a dragoon's torch.

"Monsieur," said he, "it is my first campaign. Defeat is the cruellest of all wounds."

"Monsieur, there is a crueller," I retorted.

"Do you mean love scorned?" he asked with a shrug.

"I have not known that wound," said I.

"Nor I," he said, smiling faintly. . . . "What wound, then, is crueller than defeat in battle?"

"Defeat at birth, Monsieur. . . . The scorn of the noble for the basely born is, of all wounds, cruellest and deepest."

"Sir," said he, "how can you understand that?"

"If ever we become friends, Monsieur, I shall instruct you so that you, also, can understand."

His dark eyes fixed themselves on mine, curiously. Then he smiled; and I knew I loved him.

"Let us become friends," he said. "We are of the same age. I am Philippe de Milhau, of the Regiment of Normandie. cadet of the house du Plessis. I am seventeen years old and very poor." He stretched out to me his gloved hand.

I did not take it. I looked him steadily in the eye.

"Monsieur," said I, "where I was born I do not know; nor to what name lawfully entitled, nor to what coat of arms, only that they must bear a bar sinister. I am but just arrived in Candia to volunteer in the Regiment of Normandie against the Turk; but I come too late.

"I am called Richard Stanhope; I am nineteen years old; I have nothing which is truly mine except my soul, my body, and this sword."

The young man's outstretched arm wavered, fell to his side.

"Monsieur," said I, "it is evident that we cannot become friends." I took off my hat with its soiled plume and saluted him without bitterness; and he took off his hat to me, put it on again; and we rode slowly up the mountain in silence.

Below us, in a fertile little valley set in the flank of the mountain like a green silk pocket, some houses were burning. We could see down there a vineyard, fruit trees, and camp wagons which also were on fire.

I heard an officer of Red Dragoons say that the farm sheltered some of our soldiers' women, and that the Turk had doubtless ravished them and cut their throats.

Another officer thought he could see something moving near the orange trees as though one of the wounded were still alive.

Frontenac overheard. "It is death to venture down there," he remarked, "unless one desires to sit upon a pointed stake and serenade the owls. However,"—and the pain he suffered added an edge to his irony—"yonder is a God-sent opportunity to any pious gentleman impatient for Paradise."

I had the stub of one iron spur on my left jack-boot. With it I kicked my horse in the ribs, and cantered down the grassy slope toward the conflagration below.

When I came near to the fruit trees I could see several burning buildings beyond and Turkish soldiery plundering among the smoking wreckage of wagons and dead horses. I

did not know that the Turk drank wine, but they had a cask of it and were drunk.

Not daring to ride nearer, I guided my horse along a patch of wheat to a grove. Here I fastened him under an orange tree, dismounted, and crept forward toward the fire.

There were dead men and women, some lying impaled, some near the burning buildings; some, stripped naked, sprawling under the fruit trees; and I could see that their throats had been cut and their bodies otherwise mutilated.

But also I had seen among the orange and lemon trees, and silhouetted against the fire beyond, something resembling a child crawling away from the flames and slaughter; and I set out on my hands and knees to meet it; and presently arrived very near.

It was a child of about seven years—a little girl naked in her shift; and she was creeping along toward the mountains, stealthily as a frightened wild creature slipping out of slaughter through the closing ring of beaters at a batteau.

I was fearful lest, on seeing me, she should scream; so, in turn, I stalked her through the trees until I crawled into the patch of wheat beyond. Here, lying in wait, I caught her and closed her poor little mouth while she struggled and beat upon my face and body with her tiny fists.

"Hush!" I whispered in her ear, and, "make no noise lest the Turk hear and come to slay us both. Do you understand that I am a soldier come to save you and take you back to France?"

For a few moments she quivered in my clutch but presently ceased to struggle.

"Do you promise not to cry out?" I whispered.

After a moment the little head nodded. I took my hand from her mouth and she stared at me, panting like a terrified bird.

"That's a brave little lady," I whispered. "Now lie very still while I take you up in my arms and carry you to my

horse; and then you and I will gallop away to France where there are no Turks to frighten children. . . . Do you promise to lie quiet?"

"Yes," she breathed.

With the child in my arms I rose cautiously in the wheat and, partly bending, made my way toward the tree where I could see my horse. He was moving restlessly and snorting; and now I saw several men running through the trees toward my horse. I also ran. The men yelled at me. As I was mounting, muskets began to bang, and they shouted, "Allah! Allah!" and came on with a rush, some brandishing swords and spears, some shooting at us with pistol and musket.

Small need to dig at my horse with the stub of one spur; he ran with us like a frightened deer, up the small valley, up the slope to the high road which had been cut through chalky hills across the uplands and the eastern mountain flank.

Not very far ahead I found myself galloping among retreating French infantry, which scattered and cursed me though I had avoided hitting anybody.

Farther along we came up behind artillery in slow retreat, which so encumbered the highway that I could scarcely guide my horse among them.

Where the road topped a high chalk hill they had planted two cannon to stop the Turk if he should attempt the pass.

From here I could look back out over the hilly country to the fertile plains and the sea; and, as far as the eye might travel, our rear-guard was now in action.

Where the left crutch had given way, the Turk was flanking us; a red light glimmered and shook behind the hills where his cannon rumbled and growled. Seaward his ships thundered and lightened unceasingly. Above them, high in the sky, glittered his crescent moon.

"If you please, gentlemen, a little complaisance!" I was

saying constantly in polite request for right of way. Which, usually, I was given when the surly soldiery noticed the child in my arms. And so, slowly, I made my way through the night across the Cretan mountains and toward the haven where lay our transports and some few men-o'-war.

After I had passed through the artillery and a regiment of infantry beyond, there came a clear stretch of highway where no troops were moving. The weight of the child taxed me; I was tired, and my horse was tired.

In a wallet slung from my right shoulder I managed to rummage, and drew out a bottle of red wine.

"Hold it," said I; and the child took it to her bosom and, cradling it, looked up at me out of great greyish eyes.

Continuing to rummage I found bread, figs, and two oranges.

"Are you hungry, little maid?" I asked.

"Yes, Monsieur."

I gave her bread and fruit and, moving back toward the cantle, made room for her between my body and the pommel.

Here she sat and gravely ate her bread and figs and one of the oranges whilst I managed to do the like.

There was no water, of course, but I let her take a swallow of the light, red wine—which, God knows, could never have been made in Candia!—and it warmed her.

"What is your name?" I asked presently.

"Jeanne."

"Is that all?"

"Jeanne Hérouard, Monsieur."

"How old are you, Jeanne?"

"I am eight years old."

She seemed very tired and sleepy; she rested her flushed face against my breast and looked at the crust in her little hand, which presently fell from it to the roadway.

I placed the half bottle of wine and what fragments of food remained, in my wallet; then I cast open my buff-coat

and, drawing one arm closely around the child, shook my bridle to urge the horse forward.

Jeanne Hérouard slept, holding tightly to the ragged lace of my cravatte, under shelter of my open coat which swathed her little naked body like a blanket.

A little farther on I rode up to a body of Venetian horse; but where the road forks they filed off and trotted away southward toward the fortress. They had been fighting at close quarters; many of the troopers and horses were all bloody, and some of the men had tied the severed heads of Turks to their saddles.

About dawn I came up with the French cavalry and Count Frontenac's headquarters staff.

In the dim light I saw Count Frontenac, his visage gaunt and grey with pain; but he was sitting his saddle like a rock. Fever glittered in his golden-brown eyes as he turned them on me.

"Ha," said he, "the English volunteer again. I thought they had spitted you. What's in your arms under your buff-coat; a monkey?"

I took off my hat to him and, drawing aside my coat, showed him what it was I sheltered.

"Tiens!" he exclaimed; "you discovered that infant down there?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Any others alive?"

"None, sir."

"Had the Turk gone?"

"No, sir."

"Ha! You fought?"

"I ran, sir."

"Monsieur," said he, taking off his hat to me with that wonderful smile that captivated whom he chose, "your flight was as gallant as any fight ever fought. I congratulate you and offer you a soldier's compliments."

I reddened and bowed; he put on his hat with an effort, and I could see that the movement caused agony to his shattered arm which some surgeon evidently had cared for, and which now was bandaged on a sort of board, and strapped close to his body.

I drew bridle slightly to permit my horse to fall back beside the younger officers of his entourage. As I did so I became aware of a shadowy arm and hand extended toward me. A horseman had ridden up close beside me; and I looked around into the dark, flushed face of de Milhau.

"If you will," said he, simply.

"Your friendship, Monsieur?"

"With all my heart, Monsieur. And with all the respect and admiration that is in me."

I took his hand. Our clasp lingered a moment, then I drew open my buff-coat and showed him the sleeping child.

"Is she not a pretty thing?" I whispered.

Said he, staring: "I think I have seen her before. What is the child's name?"

"Jeanne Hérouard, Monsieur—"

"My God," he whispered, "Count Palladine's daughter!"

"Who?"

"Jacques Hérouard, Comte de Palladine. His wife and child were with him."

De Milhau called in a low voice to a horseman—an old captain of gendarmerie—riding near us, his red uniform scorched and slashed, his head tied with a blood-stiffened bandage:

"Monsieur de Varras, is it certain that Count Palladine is dead?"

"I leave it to you, Monsieur," growled de Varras, "—a bar-shot from the ships cut him in two as neatly as one slices a lemon. I saw half of him lying beside his headless horse."

De Milhau made a significant motion to me; I drew aside

my buff-coat and showed the sleeping child to the gendarme. De Varras nodded:

"His child. The Countess arrived with her little daughter from Venice day before yesterday to visit her husband at cavalry headquarters. That's all very well when our King lays siege to some Flemish or Dutch city, and all the fine ladies at court come to enjoy the pretty spectacle. But this is what happens in Candia when ladies pay visits to an armed camp."

"Monsieur," said de Milhau, "did you see the Countess Palladine die?"

"I saw her body as we galloped out of that hell of fire. I passed the smoking ruins of cavalry headquarters where a dozen headless women lay. The Turk had hung their heads all over an orange tree, and there they dangled by their hair. I recognized the head of the Countess de Palladine; and we halted and, with our swords, we attempted to cut down all this ghastly fruit. That is where my poor gendarmes died—all excepting a trumpeter and myself—"

He bent forward stiffly and peered at the sleeping child.

"Last of her race," he grunted. "Count Frontenac's wife is her nearest kin." He straightened himself in his saddle with a painful effort and said grimly to me: "This affair ought to make your fortune, Monsieur. But it won't. Because our fiery Frontenac is bankrupt; and kings never reward a defeated man. . . . Our army is ruined and so are we. No officer left in this accursed island can expect royal favour. . . . And I'm thinking it had been better for every one of us if our heads were all dangling among the oranges."

De Milhau shrugged and said to me: "Nevertheless, you will be on friendly terms with Madame de Frontenac."

"Who does not live at court and has no influence there," growled de Varras. "Why not admit the truth, Milhau? You and I are poor—and I suppose this young English gentleman is also—and we all three came to Crete to make

our fortunes; and we take back with us nothing but our skins. Well—that is the world, gentlemen—”

He attempted to take off his hat to us but it stuck and blood reddened the bandage. As he turned his horse to rejoin the comrade he had left, an aide-de-camp came riding back from the head of the column saying to everybody that Count Frontenac had fainted in his saddle and had been placed in a litter.

Milhau, walking his jaded horse beside mine, spoke in a low voice about the disaster which had overtaken us all.

“I came to Crete,” he said, “because I am the youngest of a large family; and I am obliged to make my living either in the church or with my sword. However, I am not discouraged. Such catastrophes as this are to be expected, I suppose. . . . Only our King has always been victorious and I really expected to make my fortune immediately. . . . However, this campaign has given me your friendship, Monsieur, which reconciles me to fate.”

“Monsieur,” said I, “what you say I had rather hear than news of any rich inheritance.”

“Stanhope,” said he, “you express yourself too nobly not to be yourself nobly born.”

“Let be, Milhau,” said I, “for I know not what I am, and never shall know.”

“You are my dear friend and brother in arms, Stanhope.”

“And I tell you, Milhau, your friendship is more to me than a marshal’s baton and a galley-load of gold.”

He touched my shoulder impulsively, caressingly, then laughed and asked me if it was to seek a bosom friend that I had come to Candia.

“I came for three reasons,” said I. “The first is that I am in love. The second is that, being penniless and in love, I need money. The third reason that I came to Candia is because I had rather earn money by helping to fight tyranny

than in any other way. And so I came to volunteer against the Turk."

De Milhau was all sympathy. "Is the lady to whom you aspire so wealthy that her family refuse to consider you?" he asked.

We rode a while in silence, then I said: "She is very poor. She is so uneducated that she can scarcely write her name; and she never spells it twice in the same manner."

"My God," said he, "then it is a real passion and not the respectable sentiment that aspires to marriage!"

"It is passion. It aspires to everything. It is love. It includes everything—"

"But it would be madness to—"

"It *is* madness. Milhau, I think you ought to know something more of me before you give your loyalty and friendship."

"If you choose. But I love you, Stanhope, and no matter what you say I shall not change."

Then, in the darkness, leaning from his horse he embraced me in his ardent, impulsive way, and swore we were chosen comrades in arms and must love each other and share our fortunes and be ever ready and joyful to lay down our lives for each other until God called upon us to leave the world and be done with all earthly things forever.

So, riding there through torch-lit darkness, the confused trample of horses, jingle and clink of harness and weapons in our ears, I opened my heart to the first friend I ever had made in all my life.

"My first memory," said I, "is that I was a little child who led a blind ballad singer through London streets. His name was Symcott.

"He lived in the stews—near to Lewknor's Lane—in a cinder-cellar; and I lay at his feet among rags and cinders at night. We ate when he had the means to buy.

"Milhau, it is strange that this old blind man had been a

scholar. 'Twas he who, in the long, bitter winter nights, taught me to read and write—that is, when we had money to buy a light.

"When he was ill, and I could not lead him forth to sing his ballads in the stews and taverns—near the coal yard and in Drury Lane—I was a link-boy. Many a gay lady and her gallant have I lighted through London streets, Milhau. And what I earned kept our souls and bodies in company when the old man was ill. . . .

"His name was Hugh Symcott. His daughter, a very fat woman, kept a brothel. And it is with this infamous woman's child that I am in love—"

"Stanhope!"

"It is better that you listen, Milhau, so that we may learn whether your friendship can survive—"

"It survives all!" he said, "say what you will, Stanhope; and my sword shall maintain it against the world!" he added hotly.

"Thank you," said I, "but listen: one bitter, wintry morning, on my way home with my link, I saw a little girl of ten, clad in thin rags, standing in the coal-yard kennel and sifting coals. A cloud of ashes blew about her. Her arms under the faded shawl were bare; she wore neither shoes nor stockings.

"Under a shower of chestnut curls two gay, lovely eyes regarded me. Her delicate face, all grimy with ashes, became transfigured with her saucy smile.

"'God's benison upon you and me,' she cried, 'for if Dick the Link-boy feels as cold as my legs feel, I am as sorry for him as for myself!' And she shook her cinders in the sieve and laughed when the cloud enveloped me, too.

"'Have you no shoes and stockings,' I asked, 'that you stand freezing with naked feet?'

"'None,' says she, 'unless you give them to me.'

"She had the smallest, most exquisite, and shapely hands and feet that ever I thought God could fashion for even a queen.

"Milhau, I had been abroad all night with my link. I had not slept. But I went out again to see what I could earn so that I might buy her warm wool stockings.

"God was kind; a yellow fog came. All that day, and all night again, I went about with my burning link. And, on the next day, scarce able to keep my feet, having neither eaten nor slept in two nights and days, I bought her a pair of thick wool stockings and a pair of pattens, and carried them to her where she stood sifting cinders in the coal yard.

"Whereupon she cried out and laughed and kissed me; and there were cinder marks and ashes on my lips and face.

"She sat down upon a heap of coals, and I knelt and took up her poor little feet and kissed them until my tears fell upon the bleeding cuts and chilblains. . . . And so drew on her warm wool stockings and her pattens.

"And—that is all, Milhau. . . . God has been pleased to fashion and shape her body and limbs like those of a great lady. And He hath given her grace and beauty of face, and great store of wit and gaiety that floweth ever sparkling and bubbling like a foamy fountain."

Milhau laid his hand on my shoulder: "Have a care what you are about, Dick Stanhope, for, whatever may be your name and quality, yours is a tender soul and noble; and, if two streams of gentle blood unlawfully course your veins, yet is your blood still gentle."

"Old Symcott," said I, coldly, "hath had a parchment writ for me which names Prince Rupert and the wife of a captain in his Regiment of Horse. I bear my mother's married name and her husband's given name. Both are dead."

"Who is Symcott?"

"Hugh Symcott. He rode with Oliver at Naseby where a wound blinded him. He was the person I can remember—

this blind ballad singer—whom I led about; and who taught me Latin and the poets where we lay amid our rags and cinders in the cellar near Lewknor's Lane."

After a silence: "Nevertheless," said Milhau, "you shall not marry and mix your gentle blood with such a—"

"Wait!"

He became silent, but still rode with his right hand resting on my shoulder.

"Five years ago," said I, "the blind man died. It was bitter weather. I woke up in the freezing dawn, and when I would rouse him he lay there dead among the rags and cinders.

"It was better that he died. I think that want and misery had made him mad: he told me he was grandfather to Nell whose proper name never was Gwyn but Symcott. He told me to seek my rights from Prince Rupert."

"Did you?" asked Milhau.

"No."

"How long ago was that?" asked Milhau.

"Five years. I have not seen Nellie in five years. We parted with vows and tears. I came to France and listed in Schomberg's Cavalry—there being no other wars—and all my pay I sent to Nellie, month after month, year after year.

"Chamilly made me a captain, but the King would not pay us—or maybe it was his minister. But when the army in Spain was recalled and many regiments dissolved or embodied with others, the Marquis de Chamilly, who was a gallant and generous soul, got for me my pay and a discharge.

"My pay I sent to Nellie, and, with my captain's commission to recommend me, I came by a French transport to offer my sword to Monsieur de Frontenac. I arrived at the moment of disaster. And here I am riding beside you, with

a little orphan in my arms; penniless, unemployed, and in love.

"And, as for my mistress—in what a plight must she find herself! My God, it crazes me to think on it! For she is now nearly nineteen. And, so far, I have striven to maintain her against all want and evil.

"But her mother is a drunken bawd who would sell her daughter in the brothel. Her sister, Rose, is no better, and lies with any man who pays.

"Milhau, without money, I can no longer serve my mistress, nor can my passion and devotion alone any longer protect her.

"She hath wept to say it in a letter writ to me; and so have I wept to read it. But we know it is true.

"For, although when she gained her living as an orange girl, she managed somehow to remain chaste, yet now, she writes, they desire her at the King's House, and she is to be an actress there. And that means the world is to become acquainted with the greatest beauty in all England who was a cinder-girl in the stews and served strong drink to men in her mother's brothel."

"Stanhope—"

"Milhau, I have painted for you myself as I am; and have shown you the object of my passion—which passion never changed her from maid to woman. What she is now in that regard I know not. I have not seen her in five years. All I have gained in the world during these five years of absence I have sent to her. And here am I this night in Candia, with all I have left—my sword—still seeking to make my fortune so that I may have my mistress again and hold her all my life against the world.

"I was Dick the Link-boy; I am Captain Richard Stanhope now. Or, if I be another, only Prince Rupert knows.

"As for my mistress who was Cinder Nell, she is Eleanor Gwyn of the King's House today. God's mercy on us both,

for we stand—Nell Gwyn and I—in sorest need this darkest hour of our two lives—”

The child in my arms stirred, turned restlessly, and put both arms around my neck.

Chapter III

IT was a battered army which stumbled aboard the French transports moored off Crete: it was a fever-stricken, seasick, miserable army that landed in France. I should know, for I had all of these accursed ills.

Count Frontenac they carried aboard the *Admiral*. He was desperately sick of his wound, they said.

I had designed to place in his care the little orphan girl, Jeanne Hérouard, but he had become too ill to know what was happening to anybody—even to himself.

De Milhau, also, sailed aboard the *Admiral*, and we were very sad because there was no room for me, and promised each other a rendezvous wherever our ships landed; or, if that missed, in Paris anyhow.

It was a Maltese bark which they put me aboard with my little charge—*La Croix Sanglante*, her name—and she leaked and was rotten and the men were ever at the pumps—a wretched ship if ever I saw one, full of cavalry horses and sick men and artillery.

A most villainous voyage it became; and I fought off sickness so that I might care for little Jeanne and, in a crisis, make a place for her with my sword, if necessary, within one of the ship's boats.

Had the weather become as foul as the ship, we had been lost; but fair skies and light winds carried us into Lorient at last.

Here our squadron of cavalry and the artillery with its wagons disembarked. I was told that the *Admiral* had continued on to Marseilles.

For Jeanne Hérouard I found a place in a wagon with

some poor soldiers' widows; and I rode beside it upon the same horse which I had brought from Candia. Thus we made the long journey, sometimes sleeping at inns, sometimes, like gipsies, cooking our own food by the wayside and sleeping under the autumn stars.

And ever I was thinking of my mistress and what was like to be her plight since fortune had so utterly failed me. And resolved to make my way to England and go to her in London and learn what was in her mind after these five years' separation.

I remember it was a warm, bright August morning when we entered Paris.

I lifted Jeanne from the army wagon to my saddle bow. I had found the child naked in her shift; she was now covered with patched clothing too large for her; and on her legs, which dangled astride the horse's neck, were ragged woolen stockings and wooden shoes.

When I had been in Paris before, I lodged cleanly and well in the rue d'Hibou at the Sourd d'Or—a very ancient inn kept by one Pierre Mitouard and his kindly wife.

Thither, now, I guided my horse through the narrow streets of Paris, with little Jeanne Hérouard dangling her wooden shoes in front of me.

"Praise God, darling," said I, "we are arrived at last, and the Turk didn't catch us after all. That was due to the armed archangels which the Blessed Mother sent to guard us."

The child reversed her delicate head, leaned back against me and looked up into my eyes.

"If you knew how I love you?" she murmured.

"Well, tell me then, Jeanneton!" said I gaily, "for I love you, too."

"All there is in the world—all the love in heaven and on earth, Monsieur Stanhope—and the love that my father and

mother had of me—and the same adoration I entertain for God—that is how I love you.”

“But you must save some of it for the Blessed Virgin!” I said, smilingly.

“I save not a morsel of it for anybody but you!”

“Oh,” said I, laughing, “that won’t do, darling. You must adore God and the Trinity; and we shall love each other as big brothers and little sisters love. And listen—I have a little money, and shall buy for you a new shift and a pretty gown; and Madame Mitouard will bathe and comb and trim you, and care for your needs; and bye and bye some of your relatives will send for you, and all your troubles will be ended—”

“No!”

“What?”

“I don’t desire to go away.”

“I can’t keep you, Jeannette.”

“Why? Don’t you want me?”

I said I did but endeavoured to explain my circumstances.

“I will eat very little and very seldom, and I will wear rags,” she pleaded. “Please don’t go away: don’t let them take me away—”

I bent over and kissed her and her arms clasped my neck.

“I couldn’t bear it,” she said passionately.

“Here is the rue d’Hibou,” said I, “and yonder is the Sourd d’Or. Do you see the big golden salamander hanging over the door? Look! And there is Madame Mitouard in a clean smock with market baskets on both arms!”

I waved a hand to my landlady, rode into the archway, dismounted, lifted Jeanne from the horse and turned the animal over to a stable lad.

My good Madame Mitouard welcomed us warmly; her husband came out in his apron and slippers to confirm the welcome; and, in a few moments, I was back once more in my old chamber with Jeanne.

Smiling maids came to curtsy and dress the bed with clean sheets, and to set up a little bed for Jeanne.

Then Madame Mitouard carried her away to bathe her—and the poor child sorely needed cleansing!—and they fetched for me a great copper tank and filled it with steaming water.

I had left a valise there when I departed for Candia. In it were clean linen and a new uniform which I had made for Schomberg's Cavalry, but which I had no occasion to wear after the Spanish fiasco.

This I put on with my officer's coat, broad-belt, sword, new body-belt, and new boots, which God knows I needed, for my naked feet protruded from those I had worn, and even the stump of the iron spur was gone.

Then, taking my new hat, bound in silver and plumed, I went downstairs and out to the little barber next door; and there was trimmed and curled, and my beard, now long and ragged, was skilfully reduced to a faint line above my upper lip—the very shadow of a moustache—which was fashionable and convenient for eating and drinking.

So, feeling extremely clean and well in limb and body, and not dissatisfied with the figure I cut, I went out and along the street till I found a mercer's; and there commanded a tailorress to come to the Sourd d'Or and measure little Jeanne for a pretty dress; and bade her fetch silk stockings and some fine child's shifts, and send word to a hatter, too, and to a fashionable shoemaker of children's shoes.

This accomplished, I went to the Quai des Célestins to make polite inquiries concerning Count Frontenac and, if possible, wait upon him to pay my respects, and to take his commands concerning Jeanne Hérourard.

Chapter IV

THEY made no difficulty about admitting me to the Hôtel Frontenac. And the first person I saw among a throng of people in the antechamber was Philippe de Milhau, dressed like a prince.

When he caught sight of me he sprang to his feet and hastened to embrace me; and we stepped aside into the recess of a great, brilliant window and eagerly exchanged inquiries and related our experiences during all those months since the retreat from Candia.

He seemed well and in excellent spirits, and in no way the worse for that deplorable experience.

He added, laughing: "Have you come to see The Sun Hawk or The Divinity?"

"The Sun Hawk?" I repeated.

"Frontenac. Our King is called The Sun King, and, when hunting, he carries Frontenac with him—like a hawk on his wrist. The Divinity," he explained, "is what they call the lovely Madame de Frontenac in Paris."

"Is Monsieur the Count recovered?" I asked.

"His wing is still lame, but his spirit soars to the clouds. Nothing can kill such a man—nothing can quench that heart of fire—"

He drew me deeper into the embrasure of the jewelled window and lowered his voice:

"He nearly died aboard the Admiral; but he sits his saddle today; he is, financially, a ruined man; but he lives magnificently here, on the Quai des Célestins, and at Isle Savary near Blois.

"He eats and drinks with a mighty relish; he quarrels or

loves with all his might. He loves any lady who'll let him; I don't know how many do. He'd be happy to love his beautiful wife, but she won't let him. He quarrels with her, and she with him, but she stands his friend at court nevertheless.

"He quarrels with nearly everybody because he's inclined to make everybody's business his own. It's not impertinence; it's the restless, masterful energy of genius which knows everything and is impatient to set everything right in the world.

"He interfered in the domestic affairs of Madame de Montpensier and tried to tell her how to manage her house, her property, and, probably, her love affairs. She hates him but dares not complain to the King."

We both were laughing under our breath, now, and de Milhau said: "I care not whether Count Frontenac manage me if only he take the field, and I carry a sword in his company."

"Is there hope of that?" I asked wistfully.

"He is ruined; he lives lavishly; he *must* be employed! Moreover, he is a great captain. Turenne chose him for Candia above all captains in France. And The Divinity is ever intriguing for his advancement. She may not be in love with him, but she is ambitious for him.

"Sang dieu! A King like ours does not leave a man like Frontenac unemployed. He will get something some day. Something dangerous. Something impossible which he will make possible. You shall see, Stanhope—"

The doors opened and we went in to wait upon the Count and Countess de Frontenac.

Chapter V

SUCH magnificence! Could it be true that my captain with the lion's eyes was bankrupt?

There he was all in yellow and gold, his silk doublet ablaze with orders and his grim mouth sweet as a purring cat's awaiting cream.

Such manners! Such simplicity and charm, yet always one was aware—despite the unstudied grace—of the grand air!—maybe his model was the King. But this man, also, had been born to it; and it was said of him that, except for his uncontrolled temper, his manner was as perfect as the King's.

And, like the King, he saw everybody instantly with one glance.

"Milhau!" he exclaimed. "It is kind of you to remember your general whom the Turk chased out of Crete! And it is kinder yet of you to bring with you this very gallant Englishman whose name I have very much desired to know!"

De Milhau made his manners with all the easy and respectful grace of a young nobleman accustomed to society. Then he presented me; and Count Frontenac took me by the hand and led me to his Countess.

"Madame," he said, "the deed of coolest courage that ever I beheld—save only the deed I dared when I first had the effrontery to address you in terms of amorous and respectful passion—was performed by this young English gentleman, Mr. Stanhope. But, Madame, if I know my Englishmen, you will never induce him to talk about it."

The Countess smiled, gave me her hand to kiss, then drew me aside with a pretty movement, which was a command to

remain near her until she had leisure to converse with me.

Her salon was now becoming thronged with great folk; many who frequented the court; many who had been welcome there but who did not care to go thither. There were many soldiers of distinction whose names had become familiar to me; there were men of letters, churchmen, and a host of lovely and very lively ladies.

An orchestra played in the gallery beyond, where one might dance. There were tables, also, for basset and ombre.

Among the gentlemen the talk, mostly, was of Candia, and of Venice and the Turk, and also of predicted wars. I do not know what was the tone of conversation among the ladies, but it seemed gay enough; and little breezes of laughter continually rippled the scented assemblage.

"Which," said the Countess de Frontenac aside to me, "is not like Versailles, for the King dislikes both noise and perfume."

A few moments later, seeing that everybody was engaged and passably amused, the Countess beckoned me, and I followed her to one of the windows giving on the garden where a fountain played among a blaze of autumn flowers.

"I know all about your gallant deed," she said mischievously, "so you need not pain yourself by reciting it to me. Now, tell me about yourself, Mr. Stanhope. And about your ambitions. And what is the obstacle that blocks them?"

She gave me a friendly but significant look. Instinctively I realized that she knew all about me.

"Madame," said I, reddening, "it is said that you know everything, even concerning what is insignificant."

"Concerning you, Mr. Stanhope, I know nothing insignificant. Come; talk to me. Because others have talked about you—Schomberg, Chamilly—those reckless devils of cavalrymen both noticed you in Spain. And Frontenac—you heard what he said?"

"Madame, I heard."

"Well, then! De Milhau's enthusiasm concerning you is delightful. And, as for me, I am to express my thanks to you for your brave rescue of that poor little Jeanne Hérouard, who so tragically has become Countess de Palladine. . . . Is the child well?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Doubtless with you in your lodgings?"

"Yes, Madame."

"You know she is kin to the de la Grange-Trianons?"

"Yes, Madame."

The Countess began to laugh in her sweet, fascinating way, and she took hold of my hand with both of her own.

"All you say, Monsieur Stanhope, is 'Yes, Madame.'"

"I never could say 'No, Madame,' to you—"

"Oh, what a courtier already, and what a pretty aptitude!" she exclaimed. "Only that I am old enough to be your mother I would feel myself in very real danger!"

"Madame, I realize *my* danger."

"I beg you to cease creating peril for us both," she laughed. "You know you are very good looking. Come, Mr. Stanhope, you have done a gallant thing and have very deeply indebted us to you. Let me be your friend and counsellor. Truly I can do very little for you until Frontenac is employed once more. But then I ought to secure for you something not too unworthy of your station—"

"Madame, have you been informed concerning my station?"

She took my hand again and looked at me intently out of her charming, serious eyes.

"Had you been meanly born," she said, "who have led a blind man in London streets, you never had had the stomach to do in Candia what you did. Nor in Spain."

"Madame, if de Milhau told you this it was not loyal of him—"

"De Milhau told me nothing."

"Then, how did—"

"Mr. Stanhope, I make no mystery. Chamilly noticed you in Spain. Courage alone does not make captains. Schomberg desired to know more about you, but you seemed to have nothing to tell him. So Noël Bouton obtained the necessary information."

"How, Madame?"

"Parbleu, by reading the contents of your camp valise."

"What!"

"Certainly. Did you think Schomberg would make a captain out of anybody meanly born?"

"I do not know whether I am meanly born—"

"I do. What this Hugh Symcott wrote for you to keep is true enough. Listen, my friend, do you suppose that we can not learn anything we desire to know about England and Englishmen?"

"I know that it is said in London that the French King has England in his pocket," said I bluntly.

"Oh," she exclaimed laughing, "soldiers never are diplomats, and in that you resemble my husband. Mr. Stanhope, it is quite true that you are well born. If it happens that you are irregularly born, you are only one of many whose illustrious names are barred *sinistre*."

"And it is wrong of you to let it embitter you and destroy your self-confidence. It was wrong of your mother to hide herself from her family—from your father—and die of shame and starvation in a London kennel. And now it would be wrong of you not to go to your father and look him in the eyes and demand of him that justice which he owes you. He is one of the most recklessly brave and clever men in the world. And one of the handsomest. I know him. And you resemble him amazingly."

"Madame, would you have me brave Prince Rupert?"

"If you do not you will wrong him as deeply as he has wronged you!"

"I can earn my own bread."

"Is that all you need?"

"No, Madame."

"What else? Do you not need—love?"

"Yes, Madame."

"And therefore the means to pursue it to a happy capture?"

"Yes, Madame."

"My friend, you need more. You need the satisfaction of knowing that, no matter whether your father and your mother have wronged you, you never have wronged them. Mr. Stanhope, it is your duty to face your father. Do it."

After a long while I bent and kissed her hand.

"That is nobly resolved," she said, smiling at me. "Come, Mr. Stanhope, I stand your friend. You shall bring to me my poor little Countess Jeanne, and then you shall get you to England. And, when you return, you shall have employment under Count Frontenac, God willing. . . . Only I am sorry you already are in love—"

She gave me a charmingly audacious look, then bade me lead her to a table where already they had begun to play at ombre.

Chapter VI

WHEN I returned to the inn of the Golden Salamander I went thither in the gilded coach of the Countess de Frontenac.

With me travelled one of her ladies, a Mrs. Ellis, an Englishwoman, charged to fetch my little Jeanne Hérouard to the Hôtel Frontenac.

Little Jeanne, freshly bathed and curled and dressed in her new clothing, regarded Mrs. Ellis with blank hostility, then flung herself into my arms in a passion of tears.

That was a stormy hour. I had no desire to part from her, but what was I to do with a child?

She was weeping bitterly when Mrs. Ellis took her away in the great golden coach, and she stood and beat upon the window with her little hands and stretched out her arms to me so pitifully that I could scarce bear it and opened the coach door to say a last adieu.

Then I promised her that when I had gone to England, and had returned again, I would come to visit her first of all; and meanwhile would always love her and ever think on her, and never forget her as long as ever I lived.

This parting, and anxiety for Nell, my heart's sole mistress, and the prospect of forcing myself upon Prince Rupert, depressed me. Not even the hope of taking service under Count Frontenac dispelled the gloom; and that afternoon, when I rode out of Paris on my way to take ship at Calais, my heart was heavy.

I had very little money left; I had only the clothing on my back, my sword, my horse; and what I was to do in London I did not know. Dark forebodings haunted my

mind. My passion for my mistress had endured for five years of absence, fed only by the poor unlettered scrawls she wrote me, of which I could read only a portion.

This could not last. Even if she still loved me I had nothing to offer her. I realized fully that my passion for her was madness; that, long ere this, she must have had more than one lover to maintain her. And now she was an actress at the King's House!

Chapter VII

THE Channel sickened me and I remained unwell until our vessel passed Tilbury Fort.

But the ride up to London restored me and I was in a state of feverish excitement when I rode into London and baited at The World's End, a tavern by the Park. And from there straight to the King's House. For it is my way always to meet Fate in advance if possible, and know my doom quickly, if I am to suffer it or no.

Now, may all the curses of hell and purgatory rest upon the King's House; for it is worse than any stew, and, in it, are undone all women who venture thither that ever I heard of. It was there, on this day, that a bitter change came over me, and I hardened so that mind and heart became as callous as any rake's.

For, when I went into the house and saw Orange Moll, I beckoned her and gave her a billet to carry to Nell, and my last gold piece to pay her.

The play was writ by Mr. Dryden and was called "Tyranic Love," and Nell was to play Valeria.

There were not yet many in the house—some masked light-o'-loves rustling in their silks and laughing and whispering with the careless gallants who lounged near them. But nobody of high quality had yet arrived save two ladies in the box above the King's, and several young rakes in the pit.

Comes Orange Moll, who gave me an odd look, and said that Nellie read my billet and fell a-weeping, but desired to see me before she dressed and painted.

So the girl took me up into the tiring rooms and there

showed me some actresses—a Mrs. Knipp, the younger Marshall, and a pretty dark girl called Betty. Here to us came presently Nell's maid, Strayling, who said her mistress was not ready.

So Orange Moll carried me below to the scene-room to divert me; thence walked with me up and down the house above, until Nellie's maid came to take me to her mistress in the women's shift where, in her closet, Nell awaited me, partly undressed, unpainted, still in tears.

As I set foot inside she sprang up into my arms as a child springs—who was no taller than a child—clinging and hanging to my neck.

And, "Oh, Dick! Dick!" she cried, "it is all over with us—and I would to God you had had me first and kept me close, who have passed from one man to another and now am mistress to Old Rowley!—" And she fell to swearing and cursed them all—"Charles First, Charles Second, and now Old Rowley, the third Charles! I mean the King, Dicky—and be damned to him!—"

"In God's name!—" I clapt my hand over her distorted mouth and gazed into her wet starry eyes; and let her down to the floor, where she stood in her flushed and stormy beauty and choked and plucked at her fingers interlaced across her breasts.

Under the dishevelled chestnut curls her eyes gazed and gazed upon me, and there was a kind of agony like a smile which quivered and tormented her scarlet lips.

"What could I do," she said, "who at fourteen had a lover—for bread alone—to keep life in me!

"You could not keep me. I had to go on. Or go into my mother's brothel! . . . These men fed and clothed me—the three Charleses! Five years, Dick! I am nineteen! And now, Old Rowley!"

"The King," I tried to say, but found no voice.

"The King. . . . Not my sweetheart, Dick the Link-boy,

who pulled over my frozen feet those warm stockings. Not the Dick I loved. And love. But Old Rowley. The King. Charles, King of England." . . . She turned to her looking glass, sat down limply on a long settle before it, ran her lovely little fingers through her hair:

"Damnation," she said with a sob, "I must paint and tire me. . . . Paint out tears and grief. . . . Dress me for this silly tragedy. . . . This is what I say in my epilogue:

"I die

Out of my calling in a Tragedy!—

"I never loved to play a serious part. I was not made for pain—even in pretense. . . . My God," she sobbed, springing to her feet and stripping her shift to the girdle, "look upon me, Dick, who am not fashioned to endure, but made as fragile as an infant of tender flesh and tiny bones! . . . Do you see what has passed as coin to buy bread? Sound coin, they tell me. Very well: I never lied nor cheated in all life. And, if you laugh or no, nevertheless there is no vice in me! Very well. The King shall be paid in unclipped coin. . . . My God, Dick, leave me to paint this face till the shame and grief turn to a very grin—"

"Nevertheless," said I, "if you will come with me—"

"No! I pay the King to the last laugh he buys of me. . . . Will you go, Dick?"

She bowed her head and the thick curls covered her face. I went to the closet door and opened it.

"Where do you b-bait?" she sobbed, not lifting her head.

"At The World's End."

"Well done," said she with a choking laugh, "—it is the end of all for you and me. And I would that God might strike me dead in this hour!"

So I left her, huddled on her settle, her face in her tiny hands and the ruddy curls covering both.

An hour later, as I paced my chamber in The World's End, came her maid to me with a great silk purse stuffed with gold pieces ; and with it a scrawl, ill-spelled, and blotted :

I love you and know you are poor. For God's sake do me this last kindness.

NELL.

So I gave the maid all the silver that remained and bade her carry back the purse and say that I was well to do and needed nothing.

That afternoon I sold my horse and housings for six minted guineas—the kind bearing an elephant on one side.

Chapter VIII

PRINCE RUPERT I waited upon because of my word given to the Countess of Frontenac. But I had no stomach.

He made no difficulty whatever about receiving a stray captain of horse—for thus I asked his people to announce me—and maybe it was for that reason, and coupled with my name of Stanhope, that opened his door to me.

He was, they said, in his studio with his mistress, Peg Hughes, and busy at work upon a new process, which he had invented, of cutting a picture upon a plate of copper. This he inked in several tints, and, from this plate, he printed it in colours upon paper—which picture he called a mezzo-tint.

When I was ushered into a dirty and disordered glass room which stank of copperas and acids, I saw a girl who was a beauty, and who was moistening a sheet of paper with a sponge.

She smiled at me saying that the Prince was in his closet a-pressing out a printing, and would presently appear.

Then she asked me if I had seen her act in “The Island Princess” at the Drury Lane Theatre; and I confessed that I arrived from over seas and had seen nothing.

I heard a door open, and saw a handsome man in breeches and fine linen shirt with sleeves rolled to his elbows, who came toward us carrying a handful of oddly shaped cutting-tools and paint brushes.

“Well, Peggy,” said he, “this imprint should be better than the last, I think.” He laid his tools and brushes on a table where were soiled rags and flasks and copper filings. Then, wiping his fingers, he turned leisurely to me:

"Well, sir," said he, "if I can be of service to any captain of horse whose name is Stanhope it will give me pleasure."

I bowed but found no voice, because a strange trembling was meddling with my heart, checking, choking speech.

My hand became unsteady as I drew from my doublet the letter that Madame de Frontenac had writ for me to give to Prince Rupert.

With it I delivered to him also the paper which Hugh Symcott, the old blind man, had caused to be written for me.

"A petition?" inquired Prince Rupert, breaking the seal of Madame de Frontenac's letter.

As he read it his brows bent inward in perplexity. And, after a little, a slight flush mounted to his cheeks.

When he had finished reading the letter he looked at me for a few moments in silence; then, slowly, he unrolled the scroll which I had had from Hugh Symcott. He read it through.

"Well," said he, turning to his mistress, "may God damn me," says he, "if this tall and straight young man be not a natural son of mine! And what the devil do you think o' that, Peggy?"

"I think him very handsome," said she, astonished but smiling, "—and the resemblance to you is perfectly plain to anybody."

"By God," says he, "do you think so? I think so, too. *My son!* A Stanhope, too!"

"Sir," said I, "do you believe it?"

"God's fish! I do! Do you?"

I made no answer, and he began to walk to and fro, biting at the thin line of his moustache and darting swift, keen glances at me—strange, stabbing glances full of perplexities, scowls and smiles.

"Odds fish!—as the King has it," he repeated, "I believe you to be my natural son. . . . I hope you are. . . . And, if you are, damnation and a thousand devils—why has God

deprived me all these years of pleasure in your companionship?"

"For your sins, sir," said Mrs. Hughes, smilingly, "and for this sin in particular. But now you see that God forgives you."

Prince Rupert came to me and, standing close before me, looked deep into my eyes.

After a moment, slowly I dropped on one knee and touched his hand with my lips. He made me rise. Then he began to laugh in an excited manner. He took me into his arms and pressed me and kissed both my cheeks.

"By heaven and God's fishes!" he cried, "this is a happy hour! Everything shall be arranged! You shall have everything you are entitled to!" he said impetuously, "or I am not cousin to King Charles of England—"

I shook my head.

"What," said he, "do you mean by that?"

"My lord Prince," said I, "I ask nothing."

"You have no need to ask—"

"I cannot remain in England."

"Why not?" he demanded, in hot surprise.

"I am pledged to serve Count Frontenac."

"A vow?"

"My word given, my lord."

"Then, by God, you shall wear a title while you serve under Frontenac, or the King of England is no cousin of mine! You shall have a fitting title! And when you are free to return to me you shall have my arrears due from his Majesty! I will buy for you a house—somewhere near me, on the Thames—and you shall be established there, and properly; and the King shall occupy himself with your marriage and advancement—"

"I thank you, my lord, but I never could rest in a house while horses stand saddled in the world."

Prince Rupert reddened and his eyes sparkled.

"Thou art my own son, Richard!" he shouted, with a great laugh. "Thou art right! While horses stamp and whisk their tails,—while decks heave and great guns thunder, no roof should shelter men of our breed! And if this Dutch war comes not upon us presently, by heaven and God's fishes I will do somewhat to hasten it! Richard, I love thee! The King shall love thee. And so shall my Peggy. And so shall everybody in this Kingdom or I'll take a stick to 'em! Peg!—embrace my son!"

The girl came and threw both arms about my neck and kissed me.

"And tonight," shouted Prince Rupert, "we will gather at a supper which shall set Whitehall a-rocking! Richard! Richard! Dick! My own tall son!"

Chapter IX

I DID not love my father. How could I who never had laid eyes on him until I was nineteen.

Not that I resented the relation. Nor yet was I flattered—as many might have been—to learn I was a natural son to the cousin of Charles the Second, King of England.

When I was a link-boy in the kennels of Lewknor's Lane, and guided a blind ballad singer, somehow I knew I never had been born to light my betters home o' nights. Or run errands for brothel folk. Or lead a blind man. Or lay me down to sleep in rags and cinders.

There was within my mind and heart something that ever glimmered like a tiny point o' fire. The blind man's teaching blew it to a small, clear flame. God knows how I knew it, but I always did seem to understand that I had not been born to become an alley cully.

That was why, at the age of eleven, I shipped as mousse aboard a French banker and so got me into France and there listed as camp-boy and then as bugler in Chamilly's regiment of Schomberg's Horse.

Well, here was I at nineteen, ex-captain of Schomberg's Horse, once more in London, and now suddenly acknowledged as a natural son by Prince Rupert of the Rhine. I had kissed the King's hand and the Queen's. And the Duchess of Cleveland's. I was known to all great folk.

It was his Majesty himself who first showed me my mother's picture done upon ivory by Samuel Cooper. A lovely, dark-haired girl laughing at me out o' my own proper eyes. I had her nose, too, but my mouth was like Prince Rupert's, gay and grim by turns, and always reckless; but

hers was sensitive and tender yet full-lipped as a Grecian Love's. Such mouths grow dumb under pain; die, inarticulate. So she. Pride does to death those who laugh out of such eyes as hers.

One night when I was asleep in my bed, my father, Prince Rupert, very drunk at Whitehall, sent the King's bawd, Chiffinch, to bring me to him; where, presently, I discovered him at the end o' the back stairs. He had been very sick of his wine. He was maudlin, his sword out, and striving to slash the new arras. But could not. And a mighty roar of revelry from behind a closed door beyond.

"S'fish!" he hiccupped when I took him by the gold brocade on his hanging sleeve, "I loved but once, and she was your mother, Dick. And had she come to me—had she but shared her secret— But no, 's'fish!—off she goes and hides her like a wounded hind. Hell's bodkins! was it a fault o' mine you lay in rags and ashes there in Lewknor's Lane? Or whose fault? Riddle me that, now!"

I begged that he lean on me; and he did so, heavily, dropping his sword which I picked up and wiped clean. . . . The sword he carried when he led the horse at Naseby. Now fouled by his own vomit.

Then the supper room door was flung open and a great roaring gust of singing and a stench of wine and souring stomachs belched out.

I saw the Duchess of Cleveland and la belle Stuart pushing the King about, who presently came to the door, all drenched with wine which dripped from every jewel and point of lace.

"Odds fish," he cried, with a drunken laugh, "if Dick Stanhope is to play link-boy to you, Rupert, then he need not, for there is fire enough in your nose to light all London!"

"Bad King," muttered my father—"Old Rowley—led me astray— Poxed—everybody's poxed—lord and lady—King and cully—Dick!"

"Carry me to Peg."

The King nudged one of the maids of honour—a new one, very young, who was drunk; and she caught my hand and strove to draw me from Prince Rupert.

The Duchess of Cleveland came out in all her wanton beauty, naked to the waist, and challenged Prince Rupert to a last bottle.

"She-devil!" muttered Rupert, "—there's a French girl's claws sharpening for you, too! God's wrath on us every one, for we perish unless we fight the Dutch ere snow flies in the marshes!"

He put his arm—stiff with gold brocade and jewels—around my neck. I guided him while he stumbled along and cursed Chiffinch for a King's pimp and strove to kick him out o' the way.

Thus passed one of many such nights at Whitehall. And my soul loathed it. Never was I so utterly alone in spirit as during those years at Whitehall. But knew not what I wanted or how to better myself, for if ever I spoke of active service my father would not listen. There had been no greater cavalryman; no greater admiral, either, than my father, excepting the Duke of York. And now he was in his decay.

I had lodgings next to Prince Rupert; he was loving and kind—or meant to be. He stuffed my purse full for me, clothed me richly, gave me servants—would have given me a mistress, too.

But I was ill of my constant passion for her who, all now knew, was loved by the King of England, and by him maintained. The prettiest, daintiest, wittiest woman in England. And I could not rid my mind of Nell Gwyn. I could not forget. I loved her. I even wanted her to wife who had belonged to other men. I wanted her for mine, to care for, to defend, to teach, to love—as men love who love but once.

Something I must have inherited of my mother's singleness of mind and purpose. Alas, to what purpose when now

the King of England had set his seal upon this girl of nineteen! Whom all England acclaimed to be the sauciest, the cleverest, and the most exquisite actress in London town!

Well, as I say, I sickened of my passion; I could not tear my mind from it; and nothing pleased; and, God forgive me, I prayed for war to occupy my miserable mind. Alas, I have learned since what war can be—and so horrible and strange was the war I was to know that nobody—no captain in all Europe or in the English Islands—ever could imagine it.

During those three years in London, where I saw nothing except vice, learned nothing except debauchery, a very bitter hatred grew within me against tyranny and oppression. For there seemed to be nothing else in the world;—tyranny of King, of Protector, of Puritan, of Kirke, of mob.

If France and the French King had England and Charles in their pockets,—bought and paid for, and to our Kingdom's undoing,—I cared not.

Let this servile country be undone, which was not worth trussing up where three fierce religions stabbed ever the one at the other in darkness, or watched to strangle one another in God's open sunshine and in God's name.

I hated the fierce and ruthless Puritan whining in secret for vengeance, and glowering on all who believed not as he believed.

I hated the Duke of York's party and their furtive machinations to turn Rome and the Inquisition upon poor and well-to-do alike.

I hated the Church of England and its corrupt clergy, and its savage intolerance for the alien beliefs of gentle people. I hated kirke and covenant.

I wanted war—any war in which I could carry a naked sword against tyranny. Not such a war as was wantonly provoked against the Dutch. That was a vile war and wicked; and I had rather gone to Holland and listed as a common soldier under the Orange Prince than draw sword o' mine against him.

Nor was I, by nature, a conspirator, like Monmouth. No. Yet, had there arisen then in England any man to summon all men who desired freedom of mind and soul—some nobleman of spotless and untarnished honour like Ormond—I know that I would have stood with him to drive out all tyrants who oppressed and punished human conscience!

Well, then, for three idle, graceless, ignoble years I remained in England and became accustomed to the presence of the Great—the great in profligacy, in debauchery, in greed, in bigotry. And then, of a sudden, I had enough of tyranny for all time and could endure no longer.

So, one day, I waited upon my father in his glass room where he and his Peggy, very dirty with ink and acids, were scraping upon copper plates and singing lustily as they laboured.

Said I, "May I go to France, my lord?"

"God's fishes!" said he, rubbing his nose with an inky thumb which left a sooty smear there, "what the devil would you do in France that you cannot do here?"

"Wait upon Count Frontenac, your Highness." He was addressed indifferently as "my lord," "your highness," or "sir."

"Ho! He is named to govern New France, I hear," said Prince Rupert. "Have you heard that, Dick?"

"I have not, sir."

"That's the palace rumour. Well, then, how long would you be absent?"

"I do not know, my lord."

"I do," said he, "three months. And I shall not lend you longer to French count or French King. . . . See that your purse is well stuffed and that your clothing does me credit. And your servants, too, both in livery and in number. And look to it, Dick, that you carry fine horses into France.

'Twill annoy Frontenac, whose nags are not as good as mine. . . ."

He turned to pick up a graver's tool, stood looking at his copper plate, passed one arm around his mistress.

"By God, Peggy," said he, "this metal is ready to ink for a trial proof, I think. . . . Wait till I scrape up the burr—"

"Is your Highness pleased to permit me to depart into France?" I asked.

"'S'fish!" said he, scraping away at his copper, "we have broken with Holland and there should be fighting enough soon, even for a son of mine."

"I do not choose to fight against Holland," said I, sullenly.

"Oh, Dick," said Peggy Hughes, "are you turned discontent like those sour faces in the Commons, who cry out against us all?"

"Also," remarked Prince Rupert, "if you go into France you will see the French armies marching against Holland. You will see your idol, Turenne, and Condé, and Vauban, and Louvois, and a hundred and twenty thousand men marching again 't Holland, and this mealy faced Prince of Orange."

"If I never again strip my sword naked," said I, hotly, "I shall not ride against a people fighting for the right to think their own thoughts and live their own lives innocently and with malice toward nobody!"

But Prince Rupert was busy colouring his copper plate, and he only laughed; and Peggy reminded me that there were several maids of honour who had looked upon me not unkindly, and that it were silly of me to turn my back on fortune.

But I made it plain to them that I cared neither for women nor to fight against the Dutch, but had a longing to see Count Frontenac. And, if truly he were to be sent out to America to govern New France, then I had it secretly in my mind to go with him and rid myself of my passion—if that might

be—but, at all events, to free myself of this drunken, ribald, idle life which now seemed to strangle the very breath in my choking throat.

And, finally, my father consented.

I know not how deeply he loved me, or anybody. His was a wild brain—a kind of chaos composed of noble parts and base, all tumbled together; out of which fiery disorder his sheer genius sometimes cleared a headlong way to great deeds.

He loved fighting for its own sake, caring little about the cause; he loved the arts and had a fine and sensitive understanding of beauty; he loved women, and revelry; and these, at last, slew him, horribly. God rest Prince Rupert's wounded soul which life had crippled as fearfully as it had fouled and mangled his noble mind and body.

I went over into France in the month of May, with twelve servants, ten horses, several boxes of apparel, and a purse stuffed to bursting. And, in my heart, despair and anger; despair for the passion of which I could not rid myself; anger at the ruin into which our bribed and contemptible King had dragged all England, which wretched kingdom had now become the scorn of her own ally, France, and the jest of all Europe in her inertia and degradation.

Chapter X

I ARRIVED in Paris in the morning of the twenty-first of May. Lodging for myself and my people, and stable for my horses, I found in the rue d'Hibou at The Golden Salamander where the good landlord and his wife were overcome at the richness of my change of fortune. Now I was magnificent.

Hither I first had come a lank little trumpeter of Chamilly's Horse, in leather and lobster-plate helm too large for me. And next I had arrived a ragged officer out of Candia, whose toes protruded from gaping jack-boots and who carried in his arms a little girl child.

But I lingered only a little while to exchange gossip and pleasantries with these worthy folk; and, after my gorgeous retinue had been installed, I took my personal servant, Hare, mounted my best horse, and galloped to the Quai des Célestins to wait upon the Count and Countess de Frontenac.

I found the Hôtel Frontenac almost deserted save for a Swiss in scarlet and tarnished tinsel, who regarded me with apprehension when I named myself.

"Sir," said he, "do you come from the Marquis de Longwy?"

"I come on my own account," said I, "and am known to Madame de Frontenac and to the Count as their devoted admirer and friend."

The fat old man in his soiled scarlet and gold waddled close to me and lifted a trembling hand to whisper behind it: and,

"Oh, my God," says he, "the Count is all alone in the garden and nobody dare approach him. All goes wrong in

this unhappy household; he has quarreled with his Countess and she is gone; he has quarreled with the Marquis de Longwy, and awaits a challenge. He has quarreled with all his household excepting me and has turned everybody else out of doors. There remains nobody to cook for him, nobody to care for him. Moreover, he is utterly ruined and without a bit of silver to throw to a beggar. Nobody comes to see him except huissiers, whom he chases away with a stick—”

“What are you telling me?” I demanded incredulously.

“Sir, it is true. Madame de Frontenac has gone to Isle Savary—because the Count always wants to make love to her and she finds him too ardent to suit her. . . . That is partly why she ran away, partly because they have made a street-song about him and about Madame de Montespan, who was Mademoiselle de Mortemart—and about our King—”

I tried to stop the garrulous old man, but he maundered on, tears running down his fat and mottled cheeks:

“—He tried to make his Countess jealous by his attentions to Madame de Montespan, and he enraged her and irritated the King, who also makes enormous eyes at her; and all over Paris they are singing:

*“I crack my sides with laughter
Because the King loves Montespan!
I lead; he follows after
To finish up what I began.*

*“On what I’ve left upon my plate
The King may feed who sups so late,—
For when I’ve supped I come not back!—
I, Louis, Comte de Frontenac!—”*

“Will you be silent!” said I sharply. “What the devil have I to do with all this stinking court gossip, who have come from worse in London! Where is your master?”

"Have a care, noble sir, and do not attempt to approach him," pleaded the old man; but I put him aside and bade Hare remain with him, and entered in the great doors of the Hôtel de Frontenac, my spurred boots echoing loudly through the deserted hall.

A great stained window bearing the arms of Frontenac and of de la Grange faced me above a divided stairway of marble. Under this, through a grilled door, I caught a glimpse of green leaves and fountain spray; and went instantly out through this door where a most lovely garden spread away before me.

And instantly I saw Frontenac who was pacing the garden, his sword under his left arm.

He knew me; gave me a sombre but decent greeting, made a growling inquiry or two concerning my health. But in his lion's eyes I saw a sullen glare which warned me that this man was in one of his restless, leonine rages and was in a mood to quarrel with anybody who irritated him.

"Well," said he, giving me an unpleasant look, "how is the wine-bibbing, wenching King of England?"

"Sir," said I, smilingly, "our King yields all titles to the Sun King who excels in everything."

Frontenac reddened, then burst into a harsh laugh: "Does your merry monarch march on Holland?" he asked.

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"Ha!" said he, with a sneer, "they'll chase his fleet into the Thames and burn it off Tilbury Fort!"

"Monsieur le Comte," said I, losing my temper at such insolent usage, "when your Sun King bribed and bought the King of England he did not buy some few million Englishmen."

"Ho," said Frontenac, "is there still a worm left in England that dares turn on the heel that treads it?"

"Tread softly, Monseigneur, lest the worm turn serpent and strike."

"Strike? Whom?" he demanded, staring.

"Anybody," said I, "—kings, counts—anybody, Monsieur, who presumes."

"Ten thousand devils in hell and a dozen in Notre Dame!" he burst out, "do you come hither and seek me out in my garden to mock me?"

"I came to wait upon you and offer my compliments and respects," said I, "but discover I have to deal either with a boor or a madman—and so shall withdraw and leave you to your huissiers and your quarrels—"

"You throw my misfortunes in my face!" he cried.

"By God, sir, and my glove may follow, too!"

Like a flash of lightning his naked sword was glittering in his hand and he flung the sheath in my face.

"If there be a drop of Prince Rupert's blood in you," he said in a strangled voice, "you'll need it now!"

Sword beat at sword, fell away, crossed again stealthily, delicately touching, reconnoitering, gliding blade against blade like the flickering tongues of vipers.

"Monseigneur, you are mad," said I, "for no human creature in his proper senses could so villainously conduct!"

At that he was on me with a roar, and instantly we were fighting close in, guard clashing against guard and the quivering blades but a single sheet of blinding light in our eyes.

Then came a shock, and from my clenched fingers my sword seemed to be uprooted, torn free, and jerked into the air.

Dazed, panting, I stared into the lion's glare of his yellow eyes; saw the pupils narrow to brilliant slits; saw the flecks of foam on his lips.

Suddenly a crimson flush dyed his visage; the laughter fairly thundered out of him; he dropped his sword and flung both arms around my neck.

"May ten thousand priests bedevil me and ten thousand

devils torment me if I do not love you better than any man upon this devil-ridden earth!" he roared.

I was a sturdy lad and strong, but I could not stir in those powerful arms that held me.

"Dick," cried he, "forgive me who am pestered and maligned and abandoned by wife and King, and am mocked at by ballads and driven out of my senses by poverty and sheriffs. Be my friend, Dick! Embrace me, lad! For I eat every evil word I offered you, and am sore and lonely and in black despair!"

"Monseigneur," said I, "I have always loved and admired you, and am ashamed of myself who should have borne with patience your ill humour—"

"No," said he, laughing, "you endured all that a son of Rupert ought to endure, and then, very properly, planned to run me through. Ha! Had I not closed with you in time perhaps they had made a funnier ballad about poor old Frontenac!"

He roared with laughter, embraced me, threw one arm over my shoulder, and began to promenade the lawn with me, laughing, jesting, still hot and flushed with the brief but furious combat.

"Damnation and a thousand Jesuits!" he cried, "here am I left ruined, without employment, abandoned by my King when every captain in France is marching on Holland!"

"Do you wonder at my rage and despair? I need employment. I need it to buy bread! I need it because war is my trade and is good for my health, also! And they neglect me; pass me over; abandon me! Ten thousand dev—"

"Sir," I broke in, "it seems too monstrous to be true; and I think that Madame the Countess, who, I understand, possesses great influence, could aid you in this extremity—"

"She will not. We have quarreled. We quarrel all the time because I love her and she hath no such tenderness for

me. I am ardent; she is cold. And this quarrel started when I arrived from Isle Savary one night, and politely requested the company of my wife. My God, I am not so ill to look at but one would have thought it a matter of Beauty and the Beast, for my wife ran and hid herself, and when discovered set up such a screaming that all her ladies ran to her. And, 'Take him away!' she cried. And though they strove to soothe her and reason with her, and explain the nature of wifely duty—and Madame de Fiesque brought books to prove to her her wifely duty—she became hysterical, and they sent for the curé!— My God, would you believe we once were such ardent lovers that we had to elope to get married?"

He began to stride excitedly over the greensward, dragging me with him, gesticulating and talking at the top of his voice about his family woes and financial disasters and the coldness of his wife, until I was embarrassed and ashamed to listen to details so delicate and intimate.

Finally he said he was hungry, and fell to regretting that he had chased his cooks away with a stick.

I begged him to accompany me to The Golden Salamander, but he refused with a gay laugh and announced that he wished to prepare an omelette for us both in his own kitchen.

Which he did, tucking up his gold-laced sleeves to break eggs while I grated cheese and chopped chives and parsley.

I know not why he and I laughed so, there in the great empty kitchen. Perhaps because we had cracked a bottle of claret to stay us while we prepared our omelette, which smelled rich and savoury.

We ate it with great trenchers of bread, and washed it down with goblets of Bordeaux and Burgundy; and, eating and drinking, fell to telling stories amid bursts of laughter and the music of goblet clinking against goblet.

And, Lord! he was not discreet, and he laughed over his tales of gallantries until he rolled on his chair. But I had

no such tales to tell, only of clown antics **among** the great and revelry where Chiffinch and the back-stairs played the usual part.

"What!" he cried, "you have no mistress, Dick? You mean you never had any?"

I admitted a passing amourette with a **maid** of honour or two.

"Nothing serious!" he demanded.

"Nothing, sir. . . . Only a tragic constancy to one I never did possess but never can forget—and this constancy has become a kind of dull but familiar and endless unease—at times a pain—"

"They are not worth it!" he bellowed, **filling** our goblets. "When a real man offers his heart, his body, his very soul, then they are finished with him—all these jades and sluts and trulls—all these damned women we call mistresses, sweethearts, wives—there's no constancy **in** them; no true love. Once they catch you they want **you** no longer but set their snares for another!—hold out a **halter** for some other ass!—Dick?"

"Monseigneur?"

"Do you desire a **wife**?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"I am in love."

"Is she another's?"

"Yes, sir."

"Whose?"

But I would neither name her nor tell **him** that the King of England maintained the woman I loved.

"Why the devil do you desire to wed instead of loving without shackles?" he inquired.

"I have a desire for that which I never have known."

"And what may that be?"

"A home. Children to bear my name. . . . It is strange,

Monsieur, how I long for it who bear only my mother's name and never had a home."

"A thousand devils in cassocks!" he said, "look at *my* home! Where is my wife? Run away to be rid o' me. Where are my children? My only son, François, has disappeared—God knows where. My house breaks down under its load of debt; my lands are encumbered with mortgages; my revenues dwindle; my King forgets me; and here am I like a caged and shackled and abandoned thing left to starve or eat out my heart—"

"Monseigneur," said I, "take me into your service."

"What service? Am I not telling you that I remain unemployed? Am I not explaining to you that I am ruined?"

"Yes, sir. But take me, nevertheless, and let me try to aid you to mend matters."

"*You?*" He began to laugh, but not unkindly.

"Monsieur," said I, "let me go to Isle Savary and wait upon Madame Frontenac."

"To what purpose?" he demanded, still laughing.

I also smiled: "In my mind," said I, "there is an idea. Pray let me carry it to Madame."

"I know what you mean," said he, "but it is useless. My wife detests me, and, moreover, there was no truth in that rumour about my going to America as Governor of New France."

"Let me go to Isle Savary, Monsieur."

"I tell you, Dick, I have no money to send you thither—so poor am I in this accursed hour! I thank you. I am touched by your kindly zeal. But you can be of no use to me."

"Monsieur," said I, "let me prove the contrary. I have fetched with me, out of England, ten horses with their housings and a very large purse of minted gold. Grant me the honour and happiness of offering these to you."

He refused. He seemed to be astonished and very deeply

affected. But I pressed my offer with every delicacy and respect. I showed him how necessary it was to be reconciled to his Countess: that, if the Government of Canada had not yet been allotted, there was yet time for the Countess of Frontenac to employ her influence in the matter. I ventured to remind him that, if Turenne considered him one of the best soldiers in Europe, the King also was perfectly aware of that fact. That Candia had been no fault of his. The Venetian Senate had lied to him.

"Monseigneur," said I, "if, in this critical hour, I ask permission to place my small means at your disposal, it is not only because of my youthful esteem and admiration for a great captain, and my love for yourself, but also because, over the ocean, there is an empire to be designed and constructed, and vast fortunes to be made by those bold enough to undertake the task. If you undertake it I shall be repaid a hundred times the speculation.

"And, Monsieur, I am frank with you; there is more than that to be undertaken and accomplished. There is a wild, unravished, unpolluted world, unvexed as yet by tyranny, where a man may stand in his full stature and dare to live and move and have his being as freely as God designed.

"Monsieur, I am only a boy, but I have lived too long in a world befouled by man, and have sickened of his corruption, his bigotry, his endless cruelties and lusts.

"I care not where or how soon I die—and it is strange for a boy to say so—but it is true; and I desire only to come to my end fighting for that freedom of mind and body which is denied all here."

Count Frontenac, who had risen and had been striding about the kitchen, kicking pots and pans aside and twisting up his tawny moustache, turned on me suddenly:

"What are you, anyway," he cried, "—a Lutheran—Presbyter—Jansenist—Moslem?"

"None o' these, yet a little of all, Monsieur. I would disturb nobody in his belief. I would tolerate all faiths. I desire freedom only to worship God, and to conduct toward mankind as my mind and heart dictate. Sir, I have no name for this creed which I profess, and I do not know what I am."

"They'd drive you from France and burn you in Spain for it," he said with that leonine grin which made his tawny eyes sparkle with excitement.

Suddenly he roared with laughter, seized a bottle and knocked off the neck of it with his sword hilt.

"Nevertheless," he cried, "drink to the New World! Canada and New France! A new empire born for me and for me to rule! Down with tyranny! Sword, gown, cassock, and shaveling—all shall live in harmony. I tolerate but one mind, one will. My own. Which shall be one with his Majesty's—my King—Louis the Fourteenth!"

I drank; but I was doubtful that Count Frontenac clearly understood the difference between freedom and tyranny. . . . One man's will! . . . King or Pope or Grand Mogul? Yet, could the world go on under the ghostly government of God alone?

Chapter XI

COUNT FRONTENAC and I rode into Isle Savary without any notice to the Countess. He seemed to think that his arrival would prove a delightful surprise.

His Countess was walking upon the terrace of the château, in company with a graceful young woman, a child, and two superb boar hounds.

She seemed utterly confounded to see her husband ride up with his cavalcade and mine, and she stood like a beautiful statue as we dismounted.

But the Count waved his plumed hat as gaily as a lad returned home from school. All quarrels, all constraint seemed to be utterly forgotten; he sprang blithely from his horse and hastened up the marble steps, caressing the two boar hounds which leaped and capered around him.

"I am here, darling," he cried joyously to his Countess, flinging wide his arms. Then he ran forward and caught his wife's hands, kissed them, seized the motionless and astonished lady in his arms and gave her half a dozen resounding smacks on either cheek.

"I am here!" he cried. "I arrive with a magnificent idea! It remains only for you, Madame, to execute it! And as soon as you do it I shall instantly revive the fortunes of the house of Frontenac! Ours shall be wealth and glory undreamed of. Hah!"

He caught sight of the other lady, made her the most courtly and magnificent of salutations, advanced with perfect dignity and grace and kissed her reluctant hand. The lady was trying not to smile.

"Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise," he said, "only the pleasure of waiting upon my wife could possibly compare to that of saluting you! I render homage to The Two Divinities!"

He turned to me, all sparkling with gaiety and joy; but the disconcerted Countess already had recognized me with a flushed but gracious smile; and I hastened to kiss the lovely hand she so frankly abandoned to my respectful salutation.

Then, with composure, she made me known to her companion, Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise, whose smile was charming and full of mischief.

"Monsieur Stanhope," said the Countess, "have you forgotten a young lady who never has forgotten you in her prayers?"

I turned around, following the direction of her significant glance; and I saw a slender child of eleven or twelve, standing by the marble balustrade.

When she met my gaze she lost colour, then reddened and seemed confused.

"Jeanne Hérouard," I said in pleasant surprise.

Her cheeks were burning in the shadow of her curls as she spread her silken skirts in a curtsey so profound that her bright hair hid her features.

I bowed very low; went to her, raised her, took both her slender, nervous hands and saluted her. As I did so, in her lovely, half-frightened glance I saw tears; and the next instant I caught her up off the grass and she flung her arms around my neck.

"Little Countess Paladine," said I, "have you really remembered me in your prayers during these three long years?"

"Every day and every night," she whispered. . . . "Please kiss me again on both cheeks."

It was like touching sun-hot roses with one's lips. I set her upon her feet again, retained her left hand, and turned

to the ladies whose discomposure at our sudden appearance did not prevent their amusement at the passionate reunion between this child and me.

But their constraint remained evident in spite of their self-possession and perfect manners. Frontenac was a bomb; explosion must follow, sooner or later.

Into the sunny tranquillity of Isle Savary this energetic, elemental, impossible man had dropped out of a clear sky, to stir up, disturb, overturn everybody and everything as he always did.

He, however, apparently delighted with his own advent and with his reception, conversed joyously, laughed uproariously, strode hither and thither in his animated way, dragging me with him and, with me, Jeanne, pointing out the beauties of the estate with large, generous gestures that swept horizons and encompassed vast dominions, which he did not possess.

"You shall inspect my stables!" he cried. "There are no horses and no stables to compare with them in all the country! Darling," he added, addressing his wife, "did my chef and his scullions arrive here last week?"

"They did, Monsieur, after you had driven them with blows of your walking stick from the Quai des Célestins," replied the Countess drily.

"Ah!" cried Frontenac, "that is well! That is fortunate, Dick. You shall taste cooking such as never yet has delighted King or Pope! Hah! *There's* a chef!"

"Yet you beat him with an ivory stick and kicked him," remarked the Countess.

"Did I? Well, I believe I did. I forget why. However, a good beating never yet harmed anybody. He'll cook all the better—"

He pulled me by the arm to point out some spouting fountains and foamy cascades:

"The water comes from the Indre," he said proudly. "I

invented the way to do it. My engineers said to me, 'No; it can't be done!' I said: 'Do it or expect my violent displeasure!' So they did it—"

"—And the expense nearly beggared us," added the Countess.

"Well," cried Frontenac with a loud laugh, "'nearly' is not 'entirely,' darling—"

"No; we already were entirely beggared."

"Bah!" laughed Frontenac, "lack of money never alters a real man's plans. What is poverty to check such a man as I am! And I tell you, Dick, I have several magnificent projects in mind to improve this estate of mine: I shall construct a large artificial lake on the borders of that forest over yonder—"

"Which will cost a million," said the Countess with a shrug.

"In it," continued the Count, wafting a kiss toward his wife, "I shall place rare and succulent fish; and upon it I shall have a barge! A painted and beautifully gilded barge. . . . Also I shall have a miniature war-ship! To carry a crew of three! A frigate with everything perfect—guns, sails—"

"Two million," added the Countess.

"Darling," cried Frontenac, "what are two million if I spend them upon your pleasure?"

"I don't want a lake and a war-ship—"

"Yes, you do! You will be charmed! Delighted! Leave all to me, darling—"

He took my arm and led me excitedly toward the house. I still held Jeanne Hérouard's hand in mine, but had to unclasp it now as Frontenac, in his increasing enthusiasm, dragged me hither and thither as though crazed with the sunshine and green leaves.

Oh, Lord, his horses were very mediocre animals, as Prince Rupert had said; but the château really was fine and

well furnished, and the gardens and ponds and forests very beautiful.

He took me everywhere; even into the kitchen where his chef rolled terrified eyes at him while Frontenac cried: "Behold the most worthy and skillful cook in all France; and he invents dishes for me every day in the year that even the King would envy!"

He showed me his vineyards, his flocks, his fish-ponds, his poultry, his kennels: he drew me back to the house and upstairs to show me his wardrobe full of new clothes and hats and boots,—taking all these from his valets and strewing them all over his apartment, over bed, chairs, floor,—and even left two pair of laced breeches in his wife's salon, hanging over her gilded harp.

All this violent exercise gave him an appetite and very soon he began to roar for dinner; and, leaving me somewhere lost in the great house, ran to find his wife to complain of his hunger.

While I, abandoned, was striving to find my way out and discover, if possible, the rooms where I was lodged, a door upon the landing opened, and I saw Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise peep out.

When she saw me she smiled and came from her chamber to where I stood, and gave me a look full of delightful familiarity and understanding as though to say, "We two are fitted to comprehend each other."

"Why is he here?" she asked frankly.

"Madame," said I, bowing, "he can explain that to you better than I can."

"Ah," said she, smilingly, "you are charmingly faithful and discreet, Monsieur Stanhope. What qualities for a lover!"

"Alas, Madame, I lack all the others."

"I don't believe you, but I am not going to frighten you," she said.

She came a little nearer: "My God," she said, "he arrives like a hawk among the poultry to start us all into blind flight—anywhere to be safe from him. . . . How long does he remain?"

"I do not know, Madame."

"There," she murmured, "is a terrible man—wait, Monsieur!—I know his virtues, also—but how can a man so nobly born, so brave, so generous, so energetic, so capable, so full of real genius, behave as he behaves!"

"He has, when he chooses, manners as exquisitely charming and as full of dignity as the King's; yet he also storms and raves and rages and brags over nothing until all are ready to run anywhere to escape! He can not tolerate any opinion excepting his own, and if you differ from him he scolds you.

"Everything that belongs to him is the best in the world, he thinks, and he brags of everything—of his sorry nags, his silver plate which is not remarkable, of his chef whom he frightens nearly to death; his clothes of which he tells you he invents the patterns and chooses the colours and materials.

"Sometimes he behaves like a vain child, sometimes like a wild man who wishes to take everybody by storm. That's his way of making love, too! Are you astonished that his Countess flees him?"

"Madame," said I, "the greater the man the greater his faults. And, to me, this man has within him more greatness than ever I have discovered in any other. . . . Which is one of two reasons why I follow him. . . . The other reason, Madame, is because I love him."

"Monsieur Stanhope, if this is true, prove your loyalty and friendship by persuading him to go away."

"Why, Madame?"

"Because his overbearing temper always irritates the Countess who, herself, has something of a temper; and

very soon quarreling begins which ends in a violent explosion. The Countess came here to escape him. Must she flee Isle Savary, too?"

"Madame," said I, "all this that you tell me concerns and pains me, but I can not help it and am not impertinent enough to interfere."

She said: "The Countess de Frontenac admires and respects you and has a real tenderness for you because of what you did for little Jeanne. For her sake, then, persuade Monsieur the Count to bestow the honour of his presence elsewhere and leave her in peace."

"I believe," said I, "that is his intention; and probably he already has so informed Madame de Frontenac."

As I spoke a servant arrived to summon us to table; I gave my hand to Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise and we descended the beautiful staircase hung with emblems of Frontenac and of de la Grange.

Count Frontenac, his arm around his wife, awaited us in the great hall.

"Hah!" he shouted joyously, when he caught sight of me, "I have told her everything and she goes to the King tomorrow!"

The Countess gracefully released her waist from her husband's clasp and took the hand of Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise:

"Monsieur Stanhope," said she with an odd smile, "will you give your hand to Mademoiselle de Palladine?"

I turned and saw Jeanne Hérouard standing at the foot of the stairway; and I went to her and led her out.

Then the doors of the dining hall were opened and the maître d'hôtel, in blue and silver, bowed before us, leaning upon his silver staff of office:

"Monsieur the Count is served!"

Thus this bankrupt gentleman of Vendôme and his lady, and his guests, marched in to a magnificent repast, served

by eight servants in blue and silver livery, upon dishes and salvers of massive silver.

"What we really need, darling," said the Count, "is another oak, beech and chestnut forest; say 400,000 trees. But I am fifty-two years old; I can not wait for a forest to grow up. Therefore, let us set in trees already large enough to bear nuts and acorns and furnish mast sufficient to feed our wild boar."

"Another million," said the Countess; "you know, of course, where you can get such a sum, Monsieur?"

"Bah," cried Frontenac, "I have a thousand plans for raising as many millions as will give you pleasure!"

"Then," said the Countess sweetly, "pray raise for me a few odd livres d'or for household expenses, because the servants have not been paid for eight months and three more tradesmen at Blois have begun suits against you."

"Against *me*!" shouted the Count, in a sudden fury. Then his outraged gaze encountered his wife's; he darted a fiery and amorous look at her; lifted his goblet brimming with champagne and drained it to her health.

"Madame," he cried, "you shall have a thousand écus for every pretty tooth in your head and, for each lovely finger and toe, a hundred thousand livres d'or!"

"Oh, my God," said the Countess de Frontenac, turning to me, "if you were younger I'd show you the ragged lace on my chemise and the holes in my stockings—well, look anyway—"

"What you call a hole in your stocking, Madame, is but an oeil-de-boeuf discovering loveliness unutterable."

The pretty Countess laughed and laughed and shook down her bouffant silken skirts again over a glimmer of diamond garters.

"Does it console me even if Jupiter himself should remark my nakedness under shabby rags!"

"Madame," cried Frontenac, "you are the most beautiful creature in France, and it is one of my plans to employ twenty celebrated sculptors to immortalize you as Phidias immortalized the violet-eyed Aphrodite, and to create a vast park dedicated to you, for the purpose of embellishing it with a hundred statues of yourself—"

"Another million, Monsieur?" she asked with her lovely but weary smile. "I aspire only to a few pair of new stockings to cover decently my proper shins."

"Stanhope," said Frontenac excitedly, "she has no faith in me. Tell her what fortune and what glory shall be mine if the King will but hand me the reins of government of New France!"

"Madame," said I, half seriously, "there is an empire which, they say, is but a vast, undigged diamond mine."

"If I can obtain it," cried Frontenac, "I'll create a hundred cities and pave every one o' them with silver! I'll build a fortress on every hill and a château in every vale! I'll make a park as big as France and in it, darling, you and I shall hunt strange animals—lions, elephants, basilisks—"

"If," said the Countess with a shrug, "you figure for one moment that I shall follow you to New France you are sadly mistaken, my friend."

"Bah," retorted Frontenac confidently, "when I am viceroy and we have our own court and our own government in Quebec, you will think differently—"

He made a large, generous gesture as though sweeping aside a thousand obstacles:

"And all you have to do," he added, "is to go to Versailles and obtain for me the government of New France. . . . When will you go, my darling?"

The Countess de Frontenac suddenly sat up very straight in her carved chair:

"Tomorrow, Monsieur."

As we left the table I gave my hand to Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise, who whispered to me behind her fan:

"Poor Anne! She will go anywhere and instantly to be rid of him. And if she can induce the King to send him to America, God knows she'll spare no pains to do it."

I said quietly: "It is a tragic thing, Madame."

Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise looked up inquiringly: "What did you say, Monsieur?"

"I say it is a tragic thing."

"What is tragic?"

"Unrequited love, Madame."

"My God," she breathed, "can a woman remain in love with a volcano—an earthquake, a tornado? Can any human ear endure the endless elemental uproar and cosmic crashing of universal chaos? Does love feed on bellowing threats, on boasting, bragging, yelling, fighting—on incessant noises and perpetual quarrels?"

"No," said I, smiling, "nor on a pair of ragged stockings. Nevertheless, it is a tragedy to love in vain."

"It would surprise you," said she, "if I assure you that the Countess de Frontenac loves her husband better than he loves her. Would you have proof? Very well; he has had a hundred mistresses; she never has had a lover. . . . And the King himself pursued her.

"He has dragged the Frontenac honour from boudoir to brothel—and even mocked it in the seraglio. She has quietly upheld his name, his house; she has cared for and administered his estates; she has struggled with his debts and battled with his creditors. If she has not lavished caresses upon him she has shown him a deeper, finer loyalty. Amid all the intrigue and corruption in France nobody ever has pointed a finger at Anne de la Grange! Never a smile or sneer has been directed toward the Countess of Frontenac.

"In adversity she has remained loyal to him even when

obliged to live apart from him. She will go to Versailles and procure for him this Government of New France—where he can swagger and bellow and quarrel and fight to his heart's content. But she will not follow him there, or anywhere. Now, Monsieur, where lies the tragedy of love misunderstood, undervalued, unrequited?"

The following day the Countess of Frontenac and her friend, Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise, set out for Versailles in a great blue coach crusted with solid silver. Four outriders preceded them with carbines.

At parting, Count Frontenac embraced his wife so violently that her lip bled and spotted her perfumed handkerchief.

Chapter XII

ON the greensward under the beech trees, Jeanne Hérouard, seated beside me, suddenly asked me why I seemed always sad.

At which I smiled and replied that it was the cast of countenance God gave me which seemed melancholy when in repose.

She shook her head: "No," she said, "the melancholy is in your heart, Monsieur Stanhope."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because there is no real happiness in the world unless it come from within. You are restless; you roam about seeking outward distractions. When you are still your mind still wanders on; your thoughts are absent; remote, continuing the journey—roaming on and on in company with your saddened spirit."

I laughed at her, yet this young girl's intuition and her childish philosophy surprised and interested me.

"Are *you* happy, then?" I asked.

"Yes. . . . Deep in the June woods, no matter how dusky it seems, always there is a vague light; and, no matter how silent it seems, if you will listen intently, Monsieur, always you shall hear *something* singing—the breeze in the leaves, a distant bird, water flowing through hidden dusks, a tree—Do you understand? Well, it is the same within the viewless depths of me. There is no darkness there. There is always a radiance which shines through me as through a window, and touches the outside world with changing tints. . . . And always there is something singing through the

stillness within me. . . . You do not understand me, do you?"

"Yes," said I; "but what you describe is the magic of happy childhood."

"You are but twenty-two, Monsieur."

"I had no childhood, Jeanne."

She opened her charming eyes at that, but I did not choose to enlighten her.

She was a fair, pretty creature to see under a tree on a sunny day in early June—with the wild-rose hue in her cheeks framed by two bright clusters of curly hair, as was the fashion then;—and with her slender throat, and her slim, delicately rounded arms and ankles in their silken sheathing, she seemed the daintiest thing imaginable.

To match the primrose hue of her gown and stockings I plucked two primroses and drew them through the jewelled buckles of her little shoes whilst she leaned back upon her elbows watching me.

"Monsieur," she said, "have you loved many women?"

To my annoyance I felt myself redden, but I replied carelessly that I had not loved very many.

"How many?"

"None." . . . I looked elsewhere, then again at her. "One," I said.

"You still love her?"

"Yes."

"Is she beautiful?"

"Yes, Jeanne."

"Good?"

My eyes wandered toward the depths of the forest. After a long time a deer glided like a phantom across my line of vision, glimmered among the trees; vanished.

"Monsieur."

I turned my head.

"Does your lady love you in return?"

"No."

I lay for a long time on the grass, my head framed by both hands, listening to the melodious tumult of a belated cuckoo. After a while Jeanne Hérouard got up and came and lay down beside me, propping her chin on her hands.

"When you go to New France with Monsieur de Frontenac," she said, "I pray God that I also may go."

"Do you think he is likely to go, Jeanne?"

"Madame de Frontenac obtains whatever she asks for at Versailles. . . . I think she could even obtain for you your lady—if you desire her friendly offices—"

The idea of the Countess de Frontenac interceding with Charles the Second in my behalf for Nellie Gwyn struck me as so ludicrous that I burst into bitter laughter. And saw, instantly, the mortal hurt I had given this child.

"You have misunderstood me," said I.

She looked at me with quivering lips and eyes full of tears.

I said: "I tell you this much, Jeanne—that to but one other in the world have I ever admitted that I am in love. . . . You asked me; I confessed, I know not why. . . . Out of a heart and mind become too lonely, perhaps. . . . I answered you with mocking laughter. You did not understand such acrid mirth. . . . Because you know nothing about love. . . . Nor about such sorrows; and you know nothing about evil."

Slowly pain died in her eyes and the scarlet stain on her features faded.

I took my handkerchief and dried her tears. I said:

"You should know how agreeable is our friendship to me. If I laughed, it was because there is a crisis in all tragedy beyond which lies laughter. . . . You don't understand, do you?"

"M-monsieur," she said passionately, "I understand only my s-sentiments regarding you!"

Her youthful warmth both confused and touched me; and, when she went on to recall that murderous night in Candia, I made light of it and bade her think no more about so trivial a matter because we would have been friends under any circumstances.

It was thus, in conversation, or in sauntering over the fields of Isle Savary, or in riding the bony horses of Monsieur de Frontenac, that Jeanne Hérourd and I passed the days while awaiting the return of the Countess from Versailles.

As for Frontenac, he was up and abroad at cock-crow, busy with a thousand duties, a thousand schemes, running upstairs and down and through every room of the château; astride a cadaverous nag and galloping from vineyard to wheat field, from orchard-close to étang; striding all over the place with an army of workmen at his heels, flourishing maps, plans, and with large, sweeping gestures, including everything and everybody within his own domain.

He commanded plans to be drawn which no monarch would dare dream of executing; he wanted to level hills and make a range of mountains where was a valley; he made elaborate arrangements to alter the course of the River Indre, which, had he possessed the millions necessary, he had no right to do.

Ideas for a thousand extravagances heated his enthusiasm to boiling; nor did it cool him when anybody asked to be paid for services, for he either flew into a rage or roared with laughter; or, if he had any money, he'd take a heaping handful of gold and grossly overpay anybody who presented a bill. In fact, everything was solved either by some magnificent gesture of generosity or by a fit of fury.

He heard there was poverty in a small village belonging to his estate, and he wanted to send all his new and gorgeous clothing there and all the grain in his bins.

Rummaging in his wife's apartment one day he discovered a box of her jewelry, and planned, with it, to build a huge aviary for tropical birds. But her arrival put an end to that affair.

She came, one day, on the heels of one of her messengers, in her big azure and silver coach and her dusty cavalcade; and we ran to welcome her at the terrace stairs.

Frontenac lifted her from the coach and embraced her noisily—to her squirming dissatisfaction—but when he set her down he was all propriety and grace and elegance, which he knew how to be better than anybody in France except the King.

The Countess was irritable, dusty, fatigued, and not at all in a tender mood; and the first thing she did on escaping from the husband's embrace was to thrust a handful of scurrilous poems and ballads at him: "They're all about you and Mademoiselle de Mortemart—or Montespan—whatever she calls herself—"

"My God," said Frontenac naïvely, "there have been a dozen since—"

"My poor friend, they must await their turns to be immortalized—"

She noticed Jeanne, who curtseyed, and she kissed her; then, seeing me, smiled and gave me her hand to salute.

"I almost never go to court," she said, "because the etiquette is tiresome. . . . I found it just as it always is—except that this time the real men are away with the army; the fools remain."

"I go to court," said Frontenac, "because I like all that intrigue and brilliancy and noise—"

"Yes," said his wife drily, "you usually are to be encountered in the Queen's apartments when her women are pretty."

The Count looked surprised. "Certainly," he said. "I can't endure a homely woman, darling. It upsets me—"

He placed his hand on his chest—"upsets me, inside of me—"

"Read those poems," said the Countess; "they'll purge you, dear friend."

She took his extended hand, however, and entered the house, I following with Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise.

"He'll get his Government," she whispered in my ear, "but the King demands that his Sun Hawk, as he calls him, shall hunt once more with him before he sails."

I was so excited at the news that I knew not what to say. I looked at Frontenac, who was too well bred to question his wife upon a subject that was burning his very brain to ashes. She, always ready to be a little cruel to him, spoke about everything excepting the one vital matter which had taken her to the King's presence.

At the door of her apartment she took leave of him without any kindness to his uncertainty. There's a malicious devil in all women, including female saints.

Only that Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise had made it a confidence to me I would have enlightened the Count, who, when his wife disappeared, began to stride about and twist his moustache. And, as he paced the great hall, he rumbled like an unquiet lion and made smothered exclamations and switched his long sword about as though it had been a steel tail.

"Hah!" he muttered, and "hum! bah!—by the devil's cassock! Hah!" and "gr-r—" under his breath till the deep low vibration became a steady growl; and he glared at me and at Jeanne and at the banners and the arms and armour, and at the dusty boars' heads high on the wall.

Suddenly: "A thousand striped pigs and a sounder of she-priests!" he burst out—and then scowled himself into silence.

Jeanne made me play at battledore with her, but I was so excited that I sent the shuttlecock in every direction and

stumbled over both boar hounds, which awoke and rumbled at me, baring their teeth, and then thumped the floor with apologetic tails.

It was nearly two hours before a maid came from the Countess to request the honour of her husband's presence in her boudoir.

When he had gone, Jeanne looked at me and laughed:

"He has his Government of New France."

"How do you know?" I demanded.

"Madame's eyes—the bright weariness of victory. Otherwise they would have been dull."

"Such discernment, even at your age?" I laughed.

"Women always understand women. . . . I don't believe men ever could. . . . Well, Count Frontenac is to be made Governor of New France. . . . Will you go with him?"

"Yes, even if I have to follow his ship swimming."

She came slowly up to me; took in her fingers a cluster of looped ribbons which fell from my left shoulder, and began to twist and untwist them.

"Contrive that I go, too," she said in a low voice.

"But, Jeanne, you are only ten!"

"Eleven."

"And you are Countess Palladine, now."

"Does that matter?"

"The King, undoubtedly, will occupy himself with your future—with your marriage, when the time arrives—"

"I do not ask him to."

"But Madame de Frontenac, without doubt, has already done so."

"Yes. The parents of Philippe de Milhau have written to the Countess de Frontenac on their son's behalf."

"What a splendid and wonderful marriage!" I exclaimed. "He is the finest man in the world and I love him better than any man on earth—except Count Frontenac."

"Well, I don't, then," said the child calmly.

"You can not help but love him if you marry him, Jeanne."

"You think so, Monsieur?" and I saw something that resembled a glimmer of malice in her veiled glance. Then she shrugged her shoulders and began to twist and untwist the golden ribbons on my shoulder:

"I desire to go to New France," she said stubbornly.

"Why?"

"I have my reasons, Monsieur."

"Come," said I, "you are both mutinous and spoiled by indulgence, but I love you dearly and most solemnly and affectionately recommend to you my brother in arms, Philippe de Milhau, than whom no braver, handsomer, nobler gentleman exists."

"I know a finer," she murmured stubbornly. "And I do not desire that his Majesty mix in my affairs—"

"Do you know you are impertinent?"

"Very likely. Also I am annoyed."

I took her by the shoulders and considered her, but she lowered her head obstinately refusing to smile.

"A spoiled child," said I; "be sorry for yourself!"

"I am sorry. I desire to go to New France; and you and the Countess de Frontenac, and Monsieur de Milhau and the King interfere!"

"What?"

She flushed and bent her head till the curls concealed her face: "Yes, you do; you *meddle*! If they make me marry I'll take a lover!"

"What you need is a spanking!" said I.

"That would be unthinkable at eleven," she retorted haughtily. "Also, if anybody tried it I'd swear at them."

"That's what comes of roaming about alone with maids and lackeys," I said sharply. "You know too much for your years—too many undesirable things."

Suddenly she looked up at me, her eyes bright with tears:

"I really don't," she said; "I read it in a book. Besides,

I don't know how to swear except the way Monsieur de Frontenac swears. . . . Don't be angry with me, Monsieur—"

"No, darling. Only you mustn't talk that way about the King. . . . And you know well enough that you can't go to New France."

She took hold of my hands tightly:

"Some day," she said, "I shall go. Watch for me!"

I said nothing; I looked curiously down into the passionate little face and wondered what maturity held in store for this lovely, stubborn child.

Then, in the silence, I heard a door flung open on the gallery above and Frontenac came storming down the staircase, laughing, gesticulating, shouting his good fortune to me:

"I'm named Governor! And by the buzzard beak and chin of the Fourth Henry I shall *be* Governor! And I play no tambourine to the solo of any cassock in Quebec! No! And if any Intendant thinks to bully me—"

He seized me by the shoulders, embraced me, laughed, hugged me again.

"You go with me! We sail in a month! My wife swears she will not go and we've had a frightful quarrel, but parted friends. All this is splendid! All this is wonderful! By the gilded wings of God's archangels I shall begin to build fortresses and palaces as soon as ever I land in the Canadas! I shall organize a hundred cities in a hundred days! I shall organize the three estates—let Colbert rave as he may! I've dreamed all my life of building empires; and now I'm going to build one. A huge, enormous one! All French! And take immediate measures to drive the English in New York and Boston into the sea! Everything in the New World ought to be French. It shall be! I'll see to it! All I ask the King is five regiments and a squadron of horse! And a few cannon— Boom! Bang! Bang! And adieu, England!—"

"Do you know, my friend, that you are bellowing so that you make my head ache?" came a calm voice from above.

Frontenac looked up and blew a score of ardent kisses at his Countess, who stood by the gallery balustrade.

"In God's name," she said wearily, "if you mean to wash your hands before we sup, do so, for I am nearly famished—"

In June Count Frontenac was summoned to Versailles. I went with him.

Chapter XIII

WE had been at Versailles nearly a week when, at last, by command of Louis the Fourteenth, I was presented to his Majesty by Count Frontenac. The King inquired concerning Prince Rupert; asked me if I liked to hunt, bowed and passed on.

The King should not have hunted in July as he did, although it is true that wild boar breed at any time of the year and the forest always is full of sounders ranging from little stripers to yearlings.

As for wolf cubs, they are too young, but the destruction of wolves of any age is considered commendable at any season.

We English differ from the French in our ideas concerning the chase.

However, I will say this for Louis the Fourteenth; he is a hardy, fearless, determined horseman who hunts in any season, any weather, fair or foul.

Through torrential rain that nearly drowns huntsmen, horses, hounds, he laughs and gallops on; through snow, over ice, in the bitterest cold, he rides, his handsome nose to the wintry blast, rich red blood masking his joyous features.

He knows no fatigue, no impatience, no anger. He curses neither the weather, the picqueurs, the hounds, nor the quarry. I admit that this French King is a man; and our English King is not. He rides like a god; and he looks like one in the saddle or afoot.

This is the tribute of an Englishman who hates him!

But on that day in July when he hunted for the last time with his "Sun Hawk," Count Frontenac, in whose train I was permitted to ride by courtesy of the Sun King, I never before had set eyes upon the greatest King in the world; and, at that time, I neither loved nor hated him.

The King's orders to the Grand Veneur were to chase anything that ran. My God, what an order!

Also some of his huntsmen rode with hawks—a strange mélange of sports—for some hares were with young, and herons scarce done nesting, and close to the moult.

The King, that morning, was very affable and gracious, and in one of his rare, relaxed humours when he laughed easily—never loudly—and caused laughter by his playful irony and jests. Yet, withal, he wore dignity always as does Apollo his golden mantle, and he smelled of majesty a mile away—though of no other perfume, for he detested scents.

He was dressed in a hunting suit of brown and gold. He and his horse and the housings all were brown, yellow and gold like a noble beech tree in October—belt, wallet, boots, spurs, harness, hat, feathers— Lord! he made me think of the sun shining through autumn leaves—and his dark red hair curling to his shoulders!

He sat his splendid horse at the rendezvous in the centre of a grassy carrefour, where, aloft on her pedestal, a naked Diana in marble bent her marble bow at a leaping marble stag.

"Where is my Sun Hawk!" said the King, pretending not to see Count Frontenac, who instantly approached from the respectful throng of horsemen, hat in hand, bowing to his horse's neck.

"Ha!" cried the King, "my falcon comes prettily to the lure!—a noble bird but still wild—to whom his falconer must always do 'courtesy'!"

"Sire," said Frontenac, "by the Eternal and Blazing Orb which gave birth to us both, I trust that The Falconer means to fly me some day at more dangerous game than ranges these forests."

"What game do you mean?" He looked intently, smilingly, at Frontenac, then added: "If you are going to say anything indiscreet speak lower."

Frontenac gave him a hardy look.

"Sire, I speak of the Grande Chasse beyond the sea. In that unknown land I hope your Majesty will un-hood me, strip me of bells and jesses, cast me high, and bid me strike."

The King was still smiling:

"At what do you wish to strike?"

"At the traditional foe, Sire, whom you, for the moment, are pleased to fatten for the slaughter."

The King's features became expressionless. He said calmly:

"Until I un-hood you, my Sun Hawk, remain au bloc and preen your plumage."

"And whet my beak," added Frontenac with his irrepressible effrontery.

The King tolerated boldness from very few. Frontenac was one of these exceptions. His Majesty's smile was scarcely perceptible—if he smiled at all. Anyhow, it was not a frown.

He turned his beautiful horse and, as was his custom, rode slowly along the circle of guests, speaking to everybody a courteous word or two.

"Monsieur Stanhope," said he to me, "any son of Prince Rupert, whether Chesterfield or Scott, should prove a fiery horseman."

Hat in hand I bowed to the saddle pommel.

"My Sun Hawk," he added playfully, "hovers on my right hand. I charge you to look to him for he is a wild bird

and may wing on toward the Western World. . . . And then I shall have to send Grignon after him."

Frontenac heard the threat. The King laughed in his low-voiced manner; his horse walked slowly forward toward the huntsman where picqueurs were casting out the hounds.

But at mention of the Count de Grignon, who also had solicited the Government of Canada, Frontenac made a wry face at me behind the King's back as we started our horses forward toward the picqueurs.

Here, I heard somebody say, a great grey boar had bedded the night; but the bed was cold long since, and the sly beast had left after discovery the night before.

All the thickets, now, were swarming with hounds trotting busily hither and thither among the filbert bushes, snuffing, sneezing, whining or quarreling with sharp throaty growls.

The Grand Veneur consulted his picqueurs then moved farther forward; huntsmen and hounds followed.

The King's horse was very restive because of murderous forest flies, and his royal rider displayed his magnificent horsemanship carelessly, almost disdainfully, conversing all the while with Frontenac.

There were no ladies there, only gentlemen at this hunt—not even a chaise or a chair to be seen on road or sentier.

As I spurred forward to ride attendance upon Count Frontenac, a hound, far to the right, gave tongue, tentatively; then gave tongue again, like the clear, sonorous clang of an iron bell.

There came a rush of dogs and the noise of trotting horses; the full, deep alarm of the same hound again; then half a dozen hounds gave tongue; cantering horses broke into a gallop. Suddenly a hunting horn startled the woodland with the "Game afoot!" The excited outcry of the pack rose to an hysterical uproar.

Through the underbrush swept a tempest of dogs and

horses; the whole forest echoed with the clamour of hunting horns and the baying of hounds.

Ahead, to my left, I saw the King riding, his horse bounding forward at a superb stride; in front of me Frontenac galloped—horse and man like a single powerful, supple creature of tempered steel.

A picqueur, riding wide to my right, called across the tumult that it was a wolf afoot. Whatever the quarry might be, the hounds had been close to it when they started it; in fact, had surprised and nearly caught it asleep. For that reason I thought our quarry must be a boar and no wolf.

Later, as the trees, bushes and brambles grew thicker and more impenetrable, and a rocky slope jutted up ahead, I changed my opinion; for your wild boar usually will rush toward pine and fir, but the wolf invariably makes for the rocks.

Here was a difficult country full of clefts and caverns obscured by bushes and brambles—a dangerous ravine where masked crevasses gaped under thickets, and fallen trees spanned gullies where brooks leaped downward into leafy depths.

The King's huntsmen, bare headed, waited upon his Majesty to show the way around this great jutting shoulder of cliff and tumbled rock. A path fit only for goats ascended to the left; but the King swung his horse into it; Frontenac followed; I followed him.

Everywhere, looking down, I saw horsemen floundering, entangled in the inextricable confusion of rock and thicket and windfall below us. Others, unable to follow the hounds, at a loss how to withdraw, dismounted, turned, and led their horses along the glen where, beyond, acres of ferns promised a steep, slippery way out.

Far ahead the horns' treble clangor, sounding the view-halloo, called us to hasten; the wild, bell-like music of the hounds became wilder and more hysterical. Twice the

King's horse slipped and nearly fell with him—and, God save us, that would have been a dreadful fall to roll down into the viewless depths of that rocky ravine!

His Majesty betrayed no slightest concern; Frontenac rode even more carelessly; as for me, I was too excited to be afraid.

As we topped the long slope at last, and galloped into a leafy and narrow pass between the shoulder and elbow of the cliff, I became aware that the hounds had split into two entirely distinct packs; the more distant dogs were apparently still in chase of the wolf; but a dozen others, not so distant, seemed to be rapidly nearing us in full cry.

The King called gaily to Frontenac: "What do you make of that, my Sun Hawk?"

"A wolf cub, Sire," replied Frontenac.

Suddenly the King's huntsman galloped full tilt into a boar which collided with his horse. The impact sent the horse rolling over and over with its stunned rider. The boar, also knocked down by the terrific shock, scrambled and kicked among the rocks for an instant, but was on its four hoofs the next moment uttering shrill screams and roars of rage.

The King was too close to avoid the boar; the beast swung its shaggy head like lightning, striving to disembowel the horse. But the King lifted his horse upward in a mighty bound, clearing the bared tusks; and, at the same moment, Count Frontenac and I spurred out of the defile where, in a second more, our horses must have been caught and terribly mangled—perhaps slain.

But now a young and ignorant hound burst into view and hurled itself upon the gigantic quarry; and instantly was flung aside, dying, its belly ripped to rags.

There followed a rush of dogs enveloping the boar which slashed at them right and left, whirling in circles with scarlet tusks dripping. Through the hounds' uproar the great beast's tusks clattered a staccato menace; it ripped, it bit, it

made swift sallies to gore; it swung its enormous and bloody head to free the furry ears of clinging hounds.

All this passed more swiftly than I tell it. I dismounted and ran to the huntsman, who still lay unconscious on the dead leaves, and picked up his boar-spear. The boar, seeing me, flung off the dogs and came at me, but Frontenac swung his horse between the boar and me and drew the ferocious creature after him. It was a clever and courageous manœuvre, and probably saved the stunned huntsman because nowhere could I find his boar-spear, and could not have defended him.

But Frontenac, who always saw everything, noticed the spear which had lodged in the branches of a chestnut sapling; and, as he galloped in a circle, he snatched it from his saddle. The dogs now had the boar once more and he was fighting them furiously. The King rode up to Frontenac, took the spear from him, and dismounted.

"Have a care, Sire!" cried Frontenac, "for that animal designs to murder us all!"

The King looked very handsome and reckless as he walked toward the boar. His features were flushed with excitement and he was smiling slightly.

Count Frontenac drew his hunting knife and I drew mine.

"Sire," said Frontenac in a low voice, "for God's sake give the dogs more time."

Without taking his eyes from the boar, now in the middle of a ring of baying hounds and all covered with foam and blood, the King said coolly:

"Are you there, Monsieur Stanhope?"

"Here at your elbow, Sire."

"Go to my huntsman and lift him onto a horse. We may not be able to kill or hold this beast. . . . Wait! Can you sound a hunting horn?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Take my huntsman's horn and sound a rally. We should have reinforcements in this business—"

The dogs suddenly closed on the quarry; there was a terrible fracas for an instant; out of it two dogs were hurled, mortally wounded.

"Sire," I said, "I obey your Majesty unwillingly, because I fear you will need both our hunting knives."

"Be easy, Monsieur," replied the King gaily, "my Sun Hawk is enough."

"All the same," growled Frontenac, "this is not a game of tennis."

I was afraid for the King, but I had to obey. When I came to where the huntsman lay among the ferns I found him all bloody and trying to get to his feet; and I caught his horse and helped him into the saddle, where he fainted again from loss of blood.

Then I sounded a rally on his battered horn, holding the unconscious man in his saddle the while, my gaze fastened upon the King.

Suddenly the hounds rushed at the boar. There was a horrid uproar, an inextricable tangle. Then out of the mêlée rushed the boar, horrible in fury.

I saw the King brace his spear, sink to one knee; I saw the boar upon him.

As the King delivered his spear the boar carried it, and kept on through sheer weight and fury.

Then, as the bloody, gaping mouth and tusks were almost at the King's breast, I saw Frontenac's hunting knife flash like lightning, twice; and yet a third time as the shaggy monster reeled to one side, swayed for a moment, then crashed down to death, covered with frantic dogs.

A few huntsmen came galloping up; horns sounded the "Death"; dead, dying, wounded hounds were examined and cared for by arriving huntsmen.

The King did not appear to be fatigued in the slightest, and I do not believe that his pulse had become swifter by a single beat.

He said to Frontenac: "Had you not been there, my Sun Hawk, I do not exactly know where I would be at this instant. Do you?"

"Sire, I seemed to have a sniff that smelled a little of Purgatory."

"For you or me?" demanded the King, smiling. Then, to me, he said: "You see, Monsieur, how I trust to my Sun Hawk? That is why I send him out to govern New France for me. And I understand that he desires to take you with him."

"Sire," said I, "I beg the privilege of your Majesty."

"Why?" asked the King. "Because you expect there will be fighting in New France? I do not expect there will be any. Do you, my Sun Hawk?"

"Well, then, Sire," blurted out Frontenac, "there will be no fighting in New France when at last it is bounded by three oceans and a gulf."

I saw the King's brown eyes sparkle an instant, then he frowned slightly.

"There will be no fighting," he said evenly. "And, as for Monsieur Stanhope, I understand that Prince Rupert has other plans for him."

The disappointment was so keen that my features betrayed the hurt. The King's eyes never miss anything.

Frontenac said bluntly: "Sire, I have promised this young gentleman who has become dear to me and who has rendered our family a great service in rescuing our little kinswoman, Jeanne Hérouard, from the Turk in Candia—"

"I know about that," said the King. "Count, I have shown you favour by granting you my Government of New France. Further, I have occupied myself with the marriage of the Countess Palladine, and have designed her for

Monsieur de Milhau when she becomes of marriageable age.

"But it seems that this is not enough; and now you ask me to grant you permission to take Monsieur Stanhope with you."

"I humbly solicit your Majesty's permission," said Frontenac.

"What? An Englishman in your service?" said the King blandly. "And yet you seem to apprehend trouble from New York and Boston?"

His words were barbed, but he looked at me and smiled.

"Sire," said I, "I have neither name nor country nor cause. Give them to me. For, in the instant my foot touches the soil of this new empire in the wilderness, it becomes mine!—a motherland to love, to labour for, to defend with passionate devotion against the world entire!"

The King looked at me intently, then laughed in his quiet fashion, and turned to Frontenac.

"My Sun Hawk," he said, "you have hatched a fierce little French falcon out of an English egg. So you had better take your nestling to New France with you."

Chapter XIV

BEFORE I sailed with Frontenac I wrote a last farewell to Nell; and, in return, had this letter writ in her own unschooled hand—and so cost me hours of agony to decipher; and which I have now amended thus:

MY DICK SO LOST TO ME—

I wept and wept over your letter in the tire room; my God, neither little Beck nor Molly Davis could make me laugh.

My Dick, if you go among the painted savages of America remember that I also remain among painted folk more filthy, more treacherous, more savage than they—who would have my life of me for a wheaten straw and make a scalp of my ruddy hair.

When that French woman arrived—not the Mazarine but she whom Charles will create Duchess of Portsmouth—I made pretense to wear mourning for Barbara who is Duchess of Cleveland—and that slut would have done me to death only for fear of the King who can not do without my gaiety and vulgar wit. For, at heart, the King is as base and vulgar and as gay a bawd as am I a missy; and we understand each other most marvelous—as do all base minds.

But Louise de Keroualle is different. God knows she annoys me, but she is really a great lady; and one day, perhaps, may become queen of England. Which fear hath frightened the Cleveland Duchess and enraged her past all bounds; but Barbara Villiers was born a slut—which I was not though cradled in a cinder-cellar.

Oh, my poor Dick, I know not whether it is better that you go away among naked savages or sail with your father, Prince Rupert, who hath gone to the buoy at the Nore to

board the Admiral. I know nothing and care less about politics—which is why Charles hath no least concern that I am present when vast secrets are discussed; but, without betraying any confidence, I can tell you this much:—that England is in a sad way, and the dupe and plaything and slavish pensioner of the French King. And he has shoved us contemptuously into this Dutch war and flung a bribe after us. But one day he means to swallow us and let in the Inquisition; and, my God, there will be burnings then and the Holy Office in St. Paul's.

I scarce know what I write, so miserable am I to see you go. But let this be said of me, that I ever have been faithful to the hand that fed me though such hands have stabbed me a hundred times. And so it is now with Charles. They may say anything except that I betrayed him. And I tell you this because my heart inclines to you, but I can not bid you stay and hope.

God knows what is to become of you whose father is "Prince Rupert of the Rhine," the "Mad Cavalier"—the life and soul of the Stuarts! What madness must lie seething in your veins who are the son of him who fought like a devil in twenty pitched battles on land; who fought Blake at sea, and many another; who turned corsair and buccaneer and swept the Spanish Main till England, once more, called him to fight for a Stuart.

And now, once more, he hath gone aboard the Admiral with the Duke against the Dutch. And *you*!—you sail, also! Yes, into that Western hell full of naked, painted devils! And in company with the Sun Hawk, Frontenac, who is crazier than your own father,—who, at least, never foams at the mouth when furious.

When I think that it is I who have driven you thither, damnation! I could swear all the oaths I ever learned in Drury Lane, Lewknor's Lane, the King's House, or from Old Rowley himself! For the tongue of Charles is very scurvy.

Dick, I love you. The one innocent love of my life is mine for you.

Now I cease, and presently shall throw away my pen. And tire and paint myself. And so, jesting, dancing, cursing, pass like a painted shadow across the stage; and away, on, somewhere—God knows whither—where only He can ever see me in the darkness,—

THY NELL.

P. S.

I meant to make it plain that the Cleveland slut is done for. I routed her. But odds fish! My battle with Lady Portsmouth means life or death to me; and you shall never fight a more desperate one with your naked savages.

P. P. S.

Prince Rupert's miss—I mean Peggy—hath a little daughter by him. They call her Ruperta. Thy sister, Dick! Oh, my God, what a crazy world!

Chapter XV

ONE day before we went down to the sea to take ship, Count Frontenac and his beautiful Countess had a terrible quarrel because she utterly refused to go to New France with him.

All the household heard the quarrel raging all that day and most of the night. Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise, very pale, scarcely spoke a word to anybody; Jeanne Hérouard, silent and frightened, followed me closely wherever I went, although de Milhau had come down to Isle Savary and assumed a natural and courteous attitude of protection toward the child to whom, now, he was affianced.

But she would have none of him or of his consolation; nor permitted him to divert her; but haunted me like a shadow wherever I bent my steps.

The next day, when I had had my morning draught and was walking in the river meadow to take the air, Frontenac came upon me in a towering rage and shouted that his wife had gone to Paris and had bidden him to go to the devil.

"Did you ever hear of such cruelty!" he cried. "I point out to her the beauties of a Government where nobody can interfere with us and where we'll all become as rich as so many Grand Turks; and she tells me she does not love naked Indians and prefers Paris!"

He began to tramp up and down the river bank kicking at the wild-flowers and waving his arms:

"Did you ever hear the like!" he roared. "My wife abandons me! More than that, she has long laid plans to abandon me. Yes! She and d'Outrelaise have been given a magnificent apartment in the palace of Sully. For life!

Yes! And by the Grand Master of Artillery—the great, blundering jackass!”

With his gold-headed walking stick he began to mow down weeds, grasses, wild-flowers in every direction. “Very well,” he shouted, “she doesn’t love me! Let her abandon me. What do I care! I’ll have a seraglio full of Indian Princesses! What! You shall see. The most beautiful Indian Princesses in America! I’ll build a palace for them! In Quebec! I’ll—”

“Monsieur,” said I, “the little Countess Palladine is approaching.”

“Well,” he cried, “she’ll grow into a woman and know all about dirt and what a filthy world we live in. . . . Dick! Never love a woman with all your heart. Love many for a little while. They’ll all deceive you but you can find plenty more. But if ever you love one, and truly, then you’re a lost man, for they’re all as faithless as cats; and no man ever yet lived who could flatter a cat and make her tail stand when she had a mind to go elsewhere!”

When Jeanne arrived—pretense of picking flowers, but for the purpose of coming near to me—Frontenac went to her and took her by both little ears.

“You’re lovely; you’re charming; but you’ll grow into one of them!”

“Into what, **Monsieur**?” she asked, astonished.

“Into something that answers ‘Miau! **Miau!**’ when we tell it we adore it!”

He gave her ears a tweak, roared with laughter, and, lifting the child, laid her in my arms.

“Look already,” said he, “in whose arms the kitten purrs—and they’re not de Milhau’s!”

The child’s face became scarlet. I set her on her feet, smilingly.

“Monsieur the Count is plaguing you,” said I.

"Plague 'em while you can," said he; "they'll torture you when they grow up!"

He stood for a moment glaring across the meadows at his distant château, now empty of delight for him—deserted, abandoned, void as his own boisterous heart.

"A million devils and an ass in orders!" he blurted out. "And she refuses to go to America! Very well, then! I shall pass my entire life in being untrue to her!"

He began to mutter and gesticulate, not noticing us, and presently strode away, stroking down the flowers on every side.

Jeanne Hérouard leaned against a river-willow and buried her face in the cluster of wild-flowers she carried.

After a few moments I went to her and drew up her face, and discovered she was weeping.

"Oh, Lord," said I, "this is become a most melancholy household. Why do you weep, Jeanne?"

"Oh, I have reasons enough," she sobbed; "Madame de Frontenac has gone away; Monsieur the Count will go very soon; and, oh, my God, *you* also are going to abandon me forever!"

"But—"

"Oh, I did not think you would, Monsieur. Who else have I left on earth?"

"You have your affianced husband, Monsieur de Milhau—"

"Oh, yes, I forgot. . . . I wonder why I could not have been betrothed to you?"

"Why, Jeanne!" said I, surprised and somewhat disconcerted, "you should not feel that way—"

"But I do. Since that night in Crete I never have wanted anybody but you, Monsieur—"

"That is sweet and natural, and it makes me happy to hear you say so; but it has nothing to do with betrothal—"

"But," she said piteously, "when I become a woman I shall remain of the same mind concerning you."

"I hope so," said I. "You will be the wife of my dearest friend, Philippe de Milhau."

"Yes," she cried, "but if I am his wife I ought to love him better than I do you. But I don't and I never can!"

"You will," said I, smiling confidently at her tear-wet face. "You don't understand such things. Five years hence you will understand—"

"In five years," she said, "I shall love you as much as I do now. Why can't I have you, Monsieur?"

I took my laced handkerchief and wiped her face.

"Come, Grey-Eyes," said I, "smile at me!"

She smiled, tremulously.

"That's better," said I. "You are eleven; I am twenty-two. Five years hence, if we are alive, we shall be utterly different to these two who stand here at this moment. To the child you now are, you will have become a stranger; I shall have little in common with this youth who is now speaking to you here in this meadow."

"All this makes me very sad!" and her lips began to tremble.

"No," said I, "you shall be far more wonderful in the maturity of those magic days to come, who, in this hour of childhood, are heavy-hearted and perplexed."

"The years shall change and transmute and make you glorious in mind, in knowledge, in body, with a learning, an understanding, and a grace you can never dream of."

"Whatever I become," she said, passionately, "I shall see you always through these same eyes that look upon you now. You fill the whole world for me; you never can grow less!"

"You, also," said I, "shall never grow less in my heart, Jeanne."

"It is easy for you to say that, Monsieur, because you are

unhappily in love with a grown woman and I count only next."

"But, Jeanne—"

"I know how it hurts!" she said excitedly. "I love you and am fiercely jealous—but not cruel—and would give your adored lady to you if I could—even if I died of it the next instant—" Her voice ended in a great sob.

"Lord," I thought, "what's got into the child!" And I turned away in weariness and perplexity; and saw Frontenac near us among the willows.

"Miau!" said he, solemnly, and burst into a shout of laughter.

Chapter XVI

“**M**ONSIEUR!” came a quavering voice.

I lifted my head from the letter which I was writing to my father, and looked around through the candle-light. Jeanne Hérouard stood there. She said:

“If you desert me, and if the King makes me marry Monsieur de Milhau, I shall become a—a bad woman!”

Tears were rolling down her face; her features were swollen and distorted with grief; she stood against the boiserie of the gilded corridor outside my chamber door, barefoot, wearing only her night-rail. I had never before seen this violent side of the child’s character; her hands were clenched, her hair resembled a mane on end, her thin little body radiated fury which fairly made it writhe.

“What you require,” said I coldly, “is a brisk birching when you arrive in Paris; and Mademoiselle d’Outrelaise will hold you while Madame de Frontenac administers it! Go back to your bed!”

“Then you don’t love me, Monsieur!” she demanded in a strangled voice.

“I do. I’ve told you so a thousand—”

“—I mean passionately!”

“You’re eleven years old! What nonsense is this!”

“But when I’m sixteen—”

“Stop crying! Control yourself! Jeanne, I did not know you could behave like this. You’re in a temper. You’re a naughty child to get out of bed—”

“I’ll be a worse woman when I grow up unless you promise—”

"Be silent! Where did you learn such stupid language? You are to marry Monsieur de Milhau. What possesses you to insult your King and Monsieur de Milhau!"

She was almost dancing with rage, now—her little naked feet lifting and twisting, eloquent of the violence which choked speech.

Suddenly she began to swear at me:

"Ventre bleu! Monsieur! Am I a baby, then, sacrédie—"

Her swearing astonished me and I asked her where she got that stable language.

"In the stable, pardie—" she retorted impudently.

But I had had enough of noise and violence in this house of Frontenac, and I got up from the table to chase her back to her chamber.

"No!" she wailed, "no!"—as I took hold of her; "—oh, why didn't you let them cut off my head and hang it on an orange tree! Why did you save me if you didn't want me to love you? I *won't* marry that baby-faced Milhau! I won't! I—"

Frontenac came out into the corridor in his chamber robe and slippers, carrying a silver lustre of five flaming candles.

"What the devil is all this uproar?"

"Monsieur!" shrieked Jeanne, struggling in my clutch and stretching out her arms to him, "I came to his room to tell him I love him and wish to marry him when sixteen, and he laughs at me and is carrying me back to bed!"

Frontenac advanced and held his candelabra aloft to let the light shine on Jeanne's tear-marred features.

"Ha!" he said, "only eleven and already a female and a devil! For that matter they're all devils as soon as they open their eyes in the cradle." He set the candelabra on an inlaid table:

"Come to me, then, little devil," said he, holding out his hands: "I understand kittens."

Immediately she wound both arms around my neck and defied him, eyes brilliant with tears.

"There's the true female for you," said he to me; and, to her: "Well, then, darling, what is it you want? Whatever it is you shall have it, although you'll want it no longer as soon as you get it."

"I want Monsieur Stanhope," she sobbed.

"Take him, *nom de dieu*!"

She seemed bewildered at that: "But—but the King," she stammered.

"Has any man, crowned or uncrowned, ever yet controlled the heart of any female?" grinned Frontenac. "What can the King do? Marry you to Milhau? What of it? What's that to do with it? If you want this young man whom you're trying to choke to death with both arms, why, you'll get him—unless God gets him first."

"Monsieur," said I, "to put such notions into her head—even in jest—"

"It's no jest. Nor do I put any notions there. She was born with every notion in the world. Like every one of her damned sex. Take her and dump her into her bed—"

"You take her, then—"

"No! *You*!" whimpered the child. "I'll go to sleep, now."

"Yes," said Frontenac, "now that she realizes she'll get you sooner or later she'll go to sleep purring." He bent over and kissed her where the bright hair shadowed the forehead.

"Whatever we do to them," said he to me, "we never possess them. But they possess *us*! We can't get hold of them. There is no way. Even if we kill them they slip out of our hands into God's. And then, their spread fingers to their nose, their souls deride us from behind St. Peter's gate!"

Against my chest I felt Jeanne's body quivering, and, turning to look, I saw she was laughing

Frontenac grinned. "Meow!" he said, picking up his branching candle; and, gathering his Chinese silk robe about his hairy shins, he shuffled down the gilded corridor.

"Will you run back to bed if I set you down, Jeanne?" I asked.

"Oh, merci!—and my bare feet on the cold parquet!"

"You came here that way!"

"Yes, but anger warmed me. You don't wish me to catch a chill, do you, Monsieur?"

I smiled and carried her away through the corridor, then down a broad hallway and into her chamber where the little hussy had left her candle burning and a book of romances open on the pillow.

"So *that's* what you've been doing—sitting up in bed and reading!" I observed.

"Oh, Monsieur Stanhope," she cried, "in that book men really love! Ah, Holy Virgin, what passion—"

"Where did you find this book?"

"In the boudoir of Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise."

"It's no book for a child."

"She laughed when she used to read it. I watched her—"

"Unwind your arms—"

"I will. I'm happier now."

I leaned over and deposited her upon her bed, and she wriggled under cover and lay looking up at me, smiling. Then she yawned.

"Take away my book," she said, yawning again. "Now, embrace me, if you please—"

I saluted her cheeks as she turned them.

"Thank you," she murmured; "sleep safely, and God guard you, sir. Because I love you."

As I extinguished her candle I heard her sit up suddenly:

"I shall have you—in the end," she said. "Never doubt it, even in your dreams, Monsieur—" A terrific yawn swallowed the drowsy threat.

I went back to finish my letter to my father. I tore it up and began again:

YOUR HIGHNESS,

My Honoured Father [I wrote] I ask leave to congratulate Your Highness and to wish you every joy of the little daughter, Ruperta, who, I hear, has been—"

But I could not go on, and finally tore the sheet to bits. How could I wish him joy of my new half-sister who, one day, must feel as I felt about her birth?

No; I was done with Prince Rupert and the Old World with its kings and its vices and its tyranny. I should never again see England or France. Or Eleanor Gwyn. All these would fade like an evil dream in the fresh, untainted clarity of the New World—

And, by God's grace, this same New World should remain untainted if I had my way.

Then, for the first time, and suddenly, into my head flashed a purpose.

I sat up very straight and still, my brain swarming hot with thoughts of it—with the glorious, fiery splendour of it.

What did England mean to me? Or France? Or any land? What did kings mean? Or Old World governments? Or parents such as mine? Or such a life as was mine—a boy without family, without name, without heritage or home; or any recognized position in the social system of any country?

Nor was there any place for me who had no means of understanding where I belonged or who were my superiors, my inferiors, my peers.

Only on tolerance of my father was I admitted anywhere; only on sufferance permitted to occupy what military station my sword had cut out for me.

And, by God, was I to be a miscast pup of a tainted

kennel, for my father to groom and feed; and presently mate me with some uncrossed strain to correct my lineage and his mistake? And give me, thus, a clear breed title for my whelps?

Who the devil was Prince Rupert to meddle with my manhood and my destiny? Who the devil was the King of England to interfere? Or the King of France to dispose of me?

I thought of my mother. Doubtless there was more of her in me than of my father, for I had chosen a gutter child to fall in love with. The cur in me sought the cur.

I bent over the table and took my head in both hands, my brain ablaze.

I owed loyalty to nobody; allegiance to no king, no kingdom. I had no country. I had no name. No God. For what did He care about me or I about Him?

Then, for the first time, mind and heart conspired to plot together. And then, for the first time ever, I designed to make for myself, out of the bitterness of nothing, a name, a home, a country; and to fashion these out of the Western World.

New France was already French. What did I care? I would toil and plot and fight to make it Canadian!

New York and New England were Dutch and English. Let them remain so, as long as they disturbed not my country, Canada.

As for Frontenac, I loved him. But if he would not carry things with a high hand and free Canada from French and English alike, and stand against the whole world to make it a free nation, then, when the time came, I must oppose him, face him, drive him back to that sick Old World which he understood, and where he was fitted to take care of himself and serve his King.

I found myself striding about my bed-chamber, clenching my fists or flinging my arms up in excited gesticulation.

My face was hot; my heart and brain afire and throbbing.

For the first time I realized how desperately I needed a country; freedom to love it and defend it to the death; liberty to toil for it, plan for it, and strive to make of it a refuge for mind and heart—a kind land without tyranny, without bigotry; a sanctuary for those born sensible, straight of body, and sound of mind into a world wherein there is no present place for them. Except a cinder bed in Lewknor's Lane. Or a grave in Spain. Or a fruited orange tree on which to hang their severed heads in Crete. Or a silk-wadded kennel where princes breed their get as they fancy.

"Oh, God," I groaned, "make me a man, who am at heart a dog and who love a mongrel dropped in the stews of Lewknor's Lane!"

In my grief and shame it did not occur to me that the King of England also loved that same mongrel.

Chapter XVII

A WEEK before we sailed, Count Frontenac went to Paris to try once more to persuade his wife. The day we were to leave Isle Savary, he came back in a towering rage.

"She won't come," he roared as soon as he saw me; "I discovered her all curled up and purring in her new apartment. Who the devil is the Grand Master of Artillery to busy himself with my wife's affairs? And that busy little dancing master of a Duke! Yes, I mean Saint Simon. You ask, perhaps," he bellowed, "why my wife won't go to New France with me? My only answer is, 'Meow!'" Then he began to swear and stamp around in his riding boots and spurs, and push the furniture out of his way, and terrify the dogs.

"As God made little angels and gilded their rumps," he shouted, "I swear that I love my wife and none other; but she loves only literature and the arts and her ease! By the twenty league trump of Behemoth, that's all I've to be jealous of. How can a husband revenge himself on books and pictures? If it were only a man! But no. And how can I go about slicing up literature with my sword and kicking over the fine arts! I, for my part, don't know how to make my wife jealous! No! Had I a seraglio like the Grand Mogul she wouldn't care. She'd say: 'Amuse yourself, my friend!' There's no way to touch her. I never have touched her. Never possessed her. We've a son serving in Germany; yet I tell you I never possessed her. What do you think was in her mind when she eloped with me?" he yelled at me.

"I don't know, Monsieur."

"I don't either. And I don't think God knows. But *she* knows. When she ran off with me she knew why she did it. But she'll never tell.

"I look into my wife's beautiful eyes and I read—nothing! Not a damned thing! I look into the jewelled eyes of cats and I read—nothing! There's plenty there to read—in both. I see but I can't read. Nor can any man! No! Never, by God's golden blunderbuss—no man who ever yet lived has been able to read what he sees in the eyes of mistress, maid, wife, or cat! And no man ever can while this damned world lasts. But I think the glimmer in 'em means, 'I understand you, you poor fool! But you never can understand me!' Ha!"

He delivered a kick at an expensive commode. A terra cotta bust of his wife fell off and broke across. He paid no attention but began to stamp about the house, up and down the stairways, to see what his servants were packing up for his voyage to the New World.

He was like a child, wanting to take everything, and he ran about, looking for useless trifles to be packed up, until he was in a violent perspiration.

But violence always purged his temper. Presently he was singing loudly as he tramped from salon to chamber; from cellar to basement:

*"What care I whose lips I kiss!
I pay in tierce; I pay in quarte!
Garde à vous! I hit or miss
The lover's life; the lady's heart!
Gai! Though Death may lay me low
And slay me on a grassy bed;
Gai! Though Eros bend his bow
And lay me in Love's arms instead!"*

*"Lover! Draw for woe or weal!
Lady! Look me in the eyes!
Heart to heart and steel to steel—
Death or Love the Price and Prize!"*

"Damnation!" he shouted to me from the gallery, "I had a new beaver hat with two yellow plumes, and a pair of Spanish jack-boots, and I know I did, but my servants can not find them—"

He came thundering down stairs and began to fling out the contents of armoires and linen chests—as though one kept jack-boots among napkins.

However, he fell to whistling when a servant found his beaver hat; and presently he remembered that he had given the boots to an equerry.

In the garden a table was spread for us. Jeanne Hérouard came out of the château and across the clipped grass; and Frontenac, with a grace of manner which only the King could match, handed the little maid to her place at table.

"Sweetheart," he said, "you seem as fresh as a dewdrop, and to gaze at you gives me all the satisfaction of having dined on a ragoût of roses. Nevertheless," he added, "I shall offer you a filet of this new caught river-trout in sauce—what the devil's sauce is it, then?" he demanded of his maître d'hôtel.

"Sauce à la Cythère, if it lease Monsieur le Comte—"

"Ha! That's the sauce, is it? Well, Mademoiselle, mind how you behave after you taste it; for if you begin to roll large eyes at Monsieur Stanhope he'll run!"

The child blushed and carefully avoided looking at me; but she ate her dinner calmly enough, and objected, as usual, to water in her wine—without avail.

"Tomorrow night," remarked Frontenac to me, "you and I are likely to be seasick."

"Sometimes I am," said I, smiling.

"Well, then, by the brass backside of the devil, let us do today what eating and drinking we may—" He began to wave his goblet and order up from the cellar all sorts of Bordeaux, Burgundies, and several Spanish and German wines.

Jeanne, deep in pastry, lingered and dawdled; and presently she contrived to possess herself of a glass of Oporto and swallow most of it before we noticed her.

"Very well," said Frontenac, "I'm not your wet nurse, and I can't be watching you all the time. Get tight if you choose."

"I've tasted Spanish wines before now," she said with dignity. "Once, also, I had two glasses of Madeira—"

"And slept all day! I remember."

She turned rosy with mortification and gave me a confused look.

Being sorry for her chagrin, I remarked that even the King of France confined himself to one glass of wine at dinner.

But she remained silent and flushed and disconcerted until Frontenac summoned her lady in waiting and sent her about her business. She went sulkily.

All the sunny afternoon he and I sat discussing our voyage amid an increasing thicket of empty bottles. I have, I suppose, that sluggish Saxon blood which resists the warmth of the grape. A generous wine never seems to meddle with my brain to cloud it.

But where these crimson or golden wines of many countries stirred my sober English heart to merely moderate mirth, they kindled Count Frontenac to Gallic gaiety.

He kicked off his spurred boots, stripped from him his silken doublet and flung it upon the grass, and sat in his cambric shirt.

"Friend of my heart!" he cried, "You are no Englishman

as long as the grape of France sings in your phlegmatic veins! You are become French!"

He bawled for a lute; and, when it had been fetched, he ripped from the strings one of those raw songs heard in taverns:

*Her husband was a sage
Who sat within his cage
To mutter, sniff, and pore
On long forgotten lore,
Too old for love or quaffing:—
The lady and the page
Were just about the age
That sets the devil laughing.*

Ha-ha-ha! Ho-ho-ho!

Gaily, little lady, or you'll lose a beau!—

"Ha-ha-ha!" we sang, and "Ho-ho-ho!

Hurry, little lady, or you'll lose your beau!"

*In wars she wished to wage
He never would engage;
In games that she adored—
He yawned, completely bored—
His sugar-water quaffing:—
The lady kissed the page
And gave him, as a gage,
What set the devil laughing—*

And—"Ha-ha-ha! Ho-ho-ho!" we roared while Count Frontenac squalled and clawed and tore at the lute strings like a tom-cat scrambling out of hell.

"This is delightful!" he bellowed, challenging me in a great goblet of crimson Burgundy.

God forgive me, it was a noble vintage.

We sang until our parched throats rasped. I wished to

dance and I cut a few capers. He sent for whatever plump and ruddy maids were in service—lithe, laughing, brown-cheeked girls—and though they were abashed they saw very quickly what was wanted, and joined hands with us about the table in a ring-around-a-rosey.

"Gai!" cried Count Frontenac; "gai! Et de bon cœur!"

And when, breathless, we loosed their hands and sank onto benches, Frontenac sent them below stairs with a dozen of Bordeaux and a handful of écus to divide.

"I don't care what you do," he panted; "I'm going to a better world to-morrow, and after I'm gone my château may go to the devil!"

I saw that our goblets had been replenished. A most violent thirst seized me. Then an equally violent desire for a general heart-to-heart understanding with the whole world.

"Monsieur de Frontenac," said I, "it is only polite and honest of me to tell you that you are nursing a serpent in your bosom."

"Who?"

"Me!"

"Ha-ha-ha!" he roared, but I interrupted:

"Monsieur," said I, "it is only polite and honest of me to warn you that, if you take me with you on your voyage, I mean to liberate New France!"

"Hey! You wish to fight somebody?"

"Everybody!"

He considered that with vinous gravity. Presently:

"What's this," he demanded, "rebellion?" And he wagged his finger at me.

I said solemnly: "I need a new name for myself, and a new country. That's what everybody needs—a new country. So I warn you in all loyalty, Monsieur. I am a serpent in your bosom; and if you take me with you to New France I shall presently try to drive everybody out of it."

"Me, too?"

"No. You shall remain Governor of free Canada."

"But if you drive out everybody, whom shall I govern?"

"Trappers, peasants, savages—poor devils like myself who desire to nurse them back to health and happiness at Freedom's ample bosom."

The lion look began to transfigure his visage; his tawny hair and moustache quivered.

"A free country," he rumbled, "—oh, yes, by all means. I'll make free enough with it when I'm Governor. I'll kick out everybody who doesn't suit me. All the freedom they'll acquire will be a free kick apiece! I'll be too far away for the King to interfere. I have my plans."

"So have I," said I, "for a new land where one may pray as one pleases and take off one's hat if one chooses. Or keep it on!"

"You'll take off your hat to *me*!" he roared.

"Always, Monsieur. Which compels you to do the like to me." I added: "In free Canada you and I will be as alike as two peas in a pod."

"By the golden wings of the little girl angels!" he shouted, "do you think there are two men like me in this stupid world?"

"Monsieur," said I, "you are the lion and I the cub—at present. Cubs grow. That is a scientific warning but no threat."

"A threat!—" I thought he meant to launch a bottle at me. His moustache and hair were now on end; his tawny eyes blazed at me.

Suddenly he burst into thunderous laughter.

"Nevertheless, you shall go to New France with me! Think as you please; attempt what you please! I would not lose you for a peerage! No! You are my friend! I love you, and you love me! What the devil—how do I know what I shall do in this New World I'm going to? Kick out

the English? Chase savages? Spank the priests? And what next?—”

“Seize! Rule! And rule all men free!”

“By the copper hoofs of all the deputy devils, you shall say to me what you please if I have to hang you for it! . . . Of what were we speaking? Yes, of empire. Well, then—I tell you I do not know what I shall do. No Frontenac ever did know what he was about to do before he did it! No! I may cuff your boy’s ears or run you through or hang you. Although I love you! Yes!”

“I may do the like for you, Monsieur.”

“Yes, but lovingly!”

“Always!” I said sentimentally.

We wavered to our legs and embraced each other over the table, and, still embracing, emptied our goblets. Lord, what a thirst a rare wine begets! That is its chiefest virtue.

I remember I wept and told Frontenac about Nell Gwyn. He shed bitter tears, also, and began to tell me all about so many love affairs, one after another—and frequently several together—that my mind became confused and I lost the thread. Only I realized that excessive loving had made him unhappy; and a dearth of it had done the like to me.

I remember suggesting that he take holy orders and go into a monastery and let me govern New France and collect a harem. He agreed. He said he would go back to Paris and shut up his wife in a convent, and then become a monk.

“I don’t know why that old devil, the Grand Master, busies himself to find apartments for her,” he shouted in sudden fury. “It isn’t he alone; it’s Grignon, who wished to be Governor of New France and who revenges himself on me by trying to steal my wife! The only woman I ever truly loved!—” We both broke down and wept.

When I could command my sobs I suggested that we go to Paris and do the business for Grignon immediately.

"We'll start now," he whimpered, getting up unsteadily and hitching his sword belt over the wrong shoulder.

I do not exactly know what was in our minds, but, arm in arm, hatless—and he bootless—we started out across the grass and down the driveway toward the great gates, yelling for our horses.

Servants ran out and peered fearfully after us.

We sang as we strode on: "Ha-ha-ha! Ho-ho-ho!" And, coming to the gates, marched out onto the King's highway and straight across it into a field of wild-flowers where two horsemen had reined up to observe us. A hundred yards behind them their two servants sat upon two big mules.

"By the red-hot iron tail of the principal she-devil!" cried Count Frontenac, "yonder rides Grignon's nephew and his cousin, d'Alignac! Shall we begin our campaign of justice with them—if they but stir an insolent eyelash in our direction?"

He shouted so loud that the horsemen heard him perfectly well. They put their horses in motion and climbed down from their saddles in front of us. Their servants rode up to hold the two horses.

Both these gentlemen now took off their plumed hats politely. We bowed; we had no hats to remove.

"Monsieur," said the leaner and darker of the two, "have we the honour of saluting Count Frontenac of Isle Savary?"

"Monsieur," replied Frontenac, "the honours and distinctions you are pleased to bestow upon me, by deigning to pronounce so humble a name as is mine, overwhelm me with gratitude and confusion. All the same, you know damned well who I am." And he and I bowed again.

"Monsieur," said the tall, dark gentleman, "I beg the privilege of naming myself. I am the Vicomte Ruie d'Alignac; and this is Vicomte Captain Carus d'Etang de Grignon, my cousin."

"You both are tiresomely well known to me, gentlemen."

interrupted Frontenac. "Permit me, in turn, to present you to my comrade in arms and my dear friend, Monsieur the Captain Stanhope. . . . Who needs, as I do, a little polish for a rusty sword."

We all bowed very low. There was a dangerous silence; then Frontenac said gaily:

"Monsieur de Grignon, you had your answer of me in Paris a week ago—"

"Monsieur," interrupted d'Alignac sharply, "I have the honour to renew our request in behalf of my cousin, de Grignon."

"Monsieur de Grignon," said Count Frontenac with deadly politeness, "your uncle, Count de Grignon, through Monsieur d'Alignac, approached Madame de Frontenac and myself in your behalf, offering a contract of betrothal and marriage between yourself and our kinswoman, Jeanne Hérouard, Countess Palladine, eleven years of age. I replied that she was affianced to the Vicômte de Milhau, who will repeat to you what I tell you—if, by that time, you are in any condition to listen."

"The Vicomte de Milhau is dead," said d'Alignac coolly.

The blow instantly sobered Count Frontenac and me. After a stunned silence:

"In what manner did Philippe de Milhau die?" asked Frontenac in a shaken voice.

"A duel, Monsieur. It is not known who was his adversary."

Grignon grinned. Then Frontenac's eyes blazed, and, in their frightful glare, both men involuntarily sprang backward.

I looked at Grignon, then at Frontenac, and saw flecks of foam in the corners of his lion's mouth.

I said to Grignon: "Do you tell us that Monsieur de Milhau's adversary is unknown?"

"Unknown?" repeated Frontenac in a harsh, purring

voice. "Very well, gentlemen, let us discover the assassin then—for I think he stands but a pace away from me—"

"Monsieur—"

"Draw, you murderous dogs!" snarled Frontenac; and, as Grignon's sword glittered instantly, leaped at him like a springing lion.

D'Alignac's naked blade dazzled and menaced me before I could draw, and I shrank back, freed my sword and engaged him there in the meadow. Almost instantly he pricked my face on the cheek bone. The sight of my blood seemed to excite him. He began to leap and dart about like a stinging gnat, eager to thrust his weapon into me again. And he was as difficult to catch as a gnat, for I fainted at him twenty times before I slapped a few inches of steel through his ribs near to his liver.

Down he flopped among the daisies, clover, and boutons d'or; and, "O God, be merciful!" he screamed, bouncing about in the grass to escape the coup de grâce he expected.

I picked up his sword, took his dagger from him—not liking his eye—and ran down to where Frontenac had fought his adversary across the grass and into a hollow where aspens grew.

"Beware the trees!" I cried; "look out for your sword!"

"That's why I chased him down here," laughed Frontenac, "—to drop him tenderly in a pretty, secluded spot—"

Grignon sprang upon him, and Count Frontenac dashed his sword into Grignon's body—deep—clean—softly and smoothly as a bodkin pierces butter.

We bent over him. He seemed to be quite dead. Frontenac wiped his greasy, red blade, and I wiped mine on a handful of daisies.

Then we went back to where d'Alignac lay. I never supposed he would die of the discreet thrust I gave him. But he was dead, and ants already running busily over his face.

"You there!" cried Frontenac harshly to the two gaping

servants, "—get your masters away and see what can be done for them in the tavern below!"

To me he said: "That is sad about Milhau. Yet—my God—nobody ought to wish to live forever. No! And I care not when I go. . . . Meanwhile, I go to the New World for lack of a better world. . . . Are you sobered, Stanhope?"

"Yes."

"I, also. . . . God! If they could not kill us in our cups I think we must be a pair of proper blades. Ha! Yes, by Saint Michael; God alone can slay us, after all!"

Chapter XVIII

“**Y**OU know what Louis the Fourteenth does to duellists?” inquired Frontenac as we stood upon the terrace watching our baggage being stowed aboard the wains.

I turned toward him in the dark.

“Oh, I’m serious,” he said. “The King would clap us both into his Bastile.”

“Not you!”

“Certainly. I shall be listening for the gallop of musketeers behind us on our journey to the coast to-night.”

His great travelling coach arrived at a gallop, the six bony horses coming to a clashing halt at the foot of the terrace.

“Stanhope,” he said with emotion, “I know not if ever again I shall see this house. . . . Well—all houses are alike to me—and all places on earth the same. . . . It would be different if my wife cared for me—”

A troop of horses appeared, trotting out from the stables. Some score of his gentlemen and servants came hurriedly through the torchlight and stood to horse.

“They don’t wish to go,” said Frontenac. “No Frenchman cares to travel farther than to dinner or to the chamber of his neighbour’s wife. That’s as far as he cares to explore. And that is where I doubt my ancestry. There must be English blood in me, for I love to travel. . . . Which also is strange; for I love to stay home, too;—or would—if my wife—”

He shrugged; scores of yellow and orange and green ribbons fluttered on his shoulder knots.

"Eh, bien?" He looked at me with the grim grin of a lion in pain.

"All ready," said I.

"Yes—so am I. . . . Jeanne Hérouard goes to Paris to-morrow. . . . Poor old château! It won't last long; it's tottering under its mortgages. . . . Well, then—"

"I promised to bid adieu to Jeanne Hérouard—"

"She's in bed," said Frontenac, "but the little monkey is probably awake and waiting."

We ran into the great hall and upstairs. Her lady in waiting rose and curtsied, and we went into the rose-coloured bedroom of Mademoiselle Jeanne Hérouard, Comtesse de Palladine.

She had made ready for us two knots of ribbon for the breasts of our doublets—red and white, her colours.

She lay in the candle-light, awaiting us; and when we entered she sat up in bed and flung her arms around Frontenac's neck with a happy, excited cry.

"What! No tears?" he demanded.

"No, Monsieur, because I shall join you in New France as soon as I am old enough to have my own way."

He pretended to believe her, and made his leave-taking gay and careless.

As for me, I was a little puzzled at the girl's gaiety. She reached out one hand to me and I saluted it with all the gravity and politeness in the world.

Frontenac was already going out of the boudoir door, and I had turned to follow when she called me back.

"Yes," laughed Frontenac, "you owe him a kiss and de bon cœur, because he fought a man to-day for your sake!"

The girl's hand tightened on my sleeve; she sat looking at the doorway and listening to the departing clank and chime of sword and spur.

Then she pulled me toward her with a nervous movement that brought me down sitting on her bed's edge.

"Monsieur," she asked breathlessly, "did you fight today for my sake?"

"Well—dame!—we thought one of them slew poor Monsieur de Milhau. . . . He was my friend. . . . Besides, that touched the honour of this house. You see?"

"You are not of this house."

"No," said I sadly, "nor of any house. But a poor devil may draw sword for his friends."

"Would you always draw for *me*, Monsieur?"

"Surely," said I, smiling. "Come, pin your ribbons to my doublet, for I must depart—"

She was busy with the knot of red and white ribbons for a moment. Suddenly she sprang up, kneeling on the bed, and passed her arms around my neck.

"Goodbye, darling Monsieur! Goodbye! Goodbye!" she sobbed. "You don't love me but you shall! You break my heart but I'll make you sorry! Oh, yes, I'll make you sorry. . . . And if you were dying for her I'd never let you have your English mistress! I'd let you die! I *would*! And then kill myself!"

I tried not to smile. I kissed her forehead and both cheeks.

"The—the mouth—" she faltered; "won't you?"

"Where the devil got you such notions?" said I, striving to repress my laughter—so droll seemed this child to me.

She hurled herself upon her pillow in a storm of tears:

"Very well," she sobbed, "I shall become beautiful and wicked! I shall take lovers! Several! And when we meet again you shall suffer because of my beauty and my cruelty, and I shall laugh at you as you laugh at me—"

I certainly was laughing now. I could not control myself.

"Adieu, dear Countess," said I, "and conduct properly or there will be a spanking party when you arrive in Paris!"

At that she was out of bed in a bound, her features distorted with passion, and ran to me and caught me by both arms and shook me furiously.

For all her slight strength her access of rage threw me off my balance.

"You dare mock at me who by rights am yours!" she cried in a strangled voice. "I'll teach you to despise the life you saved!"

She shook me and shook me, crying out that she wished her head were hanging among the oranges, and that I'd wish mine were hanging there, too, before she had done with me.

My astonishment gave place to anger and disgust; I caught her up, carried her squirming to her bed and there—God forgive me—I spanked her thoroughly and hard, and in silence on my part, though she was vocal enough. Between lamentable cries she swore like a stable lad—where no doubt she acquired the vocabulary—and she shrieked that I might beat her to death but I nevertheless belonged to her and never should have my English sweetheart.

Out o' breath I rolled her over among her pillows and strode away through the door; and again she was out of bed and hurled a book at my head, and after it other objects which hit the door, which I slammed behind me.

When again I had descended to the terrace: "Well?" inquired Frontenac impatiently.

"The child is a devil," said I; "God pity her future husband!"

"God pity all husbands," growled Frontenac; "they all marry devils."

We drew on our travelling cloaks, settled our swords, looked over our pistols, and descended the steps.

It was bright starlight.

"Mount, gentlemen," said Count Frontenac to his people.

We got into the great travelling coach, the clash of swords and spurs in our ears.

The next evening we were aboard, anchors a-trip, and the great sails filling—bound for the New World.

Chapter XIX

A SEA-VOYAGE was no new thing to me who, when a small lad, had sailed to Vigo with the cavalry horses for Monsieur de Chamilly's Regiment. Later, also, I had made two military voyages to Venice and to Greece. So the long weeks at sea did not very greatly disturb my mind or stomach.

Never a sunrise in midocean but I thought myself blessed to be free of that old and rotten world. Never a nightfall but I thanked God I was rid of the tyranny and corruption of courts and was headed toward a New World unpolluted by bigotry and cruelty.

It was, as I say, a voyage which neither inconvenienced me nor bored me. We had in our ship a great many people. There were Count Frontenac's guards, his valets and pages; two companies of raw recruits, a number of skilled artisans such as joiners, carpenters, locksmiths, masons; four sullen Sulpitians of the Montreal Government; and two jolly Recollet Fathers who did not speak to the Sulpitians.

Also, on board us, was a large and gay company of sturdy young peasant girls—"King's girls"—who were going out to New France to become wives of farmers, shop-keepers, and traders. For the greatest source of discontent in New France was the scarcity of young women suitable for wives.

During the early days of our voyage, when we were wary of Dutch warships, often I walked with Count Frontenac on the quarter deck with our spy-glasses under our arms; and he always entertained me with fiery animation, discussing every subject under the sun—always with a lively—and, I think, hopeful—eye cocked for some Dutch warship

with which to exchange a few broadsides to relieve the monotony of the voyage.

Thus I learned something about everything under the sun; and particularly about New France; and that the inhabitants, mostly, were disbanded soldiers, which, in their several parishes, constituted a seasoned and trained militia in time of need. Otherwise there were no soldiers in Canada.

Frontenac explained to me that the foundation of this vigorous peasantry was the soldiery of Monsieur de Salière's Regiment of the Prince de Carignan's Infantry of Savoy.

This magnificent body of men, he told me, was the first regiment of regular troops ever sent into New France. It had arrived there seven years ago; served for a year or two; and then it had been disbanded in Quebec. These soldiers of Carignan were now farmers, fur-traders, boatmen, artisans. The officers all were connected with the nobility, and had settled and married in New France. They constituted the bulk of the nobility and landed gentry of the colony—each with his own seigniory,—that is, his manorial mansion, lands, farms, fishing-stations.

This nobility included such gentlemen as the Captains Chambly, De Contrecoeur, Sorel, Du Gué, Saint-Ours; the Lieutenants Rougemont, La Combe, Traversy, De la Fouille.

"All very well," growled Frontenac, "for our King to pour into New France by ship-loads his young nobles, his soldiers, peasants, wenches, horses, cattle, sheep, poultry, fruit trees, and seeds;—all very fine. But they tell me that Quebec is but a hell's nest of priests, friars and Jesuits who have turned out three Governors already and are licking their chops to make a meal of me. Hah! We shall see which eats which!"

He squinted seaward through his telescope, never entirely hopeless of a Dutch ship and an exchange of broadsides to while away the time.

"Oh, yes," said he, "we shall see who is to eat the meal and

who is to be served up! Fancy a babbling Bishop turning out three military gentlemen—three Governors!—because they refused to run like dogs at his velvet-shod heels!—the Vicomte d'Argenson, Sieur de Mesy, Marquis de Tracy—and, by God, Courcelle, too! I care not if this Bishop of Canada be a Montmorency, and so connected with royalty itself!— Let him play God Almighty to cassock, wimple, and shaven-pate!

"But if he believe that an empire is built by chanting Te Deums and converting savages and stopping my impatient vanguard to pray at every Calvary, then his lordship and I quarrel!"

"Monsieur," said I, "Bishop Laval seems to be—like all other ecclesiastics—determined to subordinate the state to the church. Otherwise, I hear, he is a very holy and saintly priest."

"He had better keep his saintly fingers off temporal power, then, while I am Governor of New France; and off the fur trade, too," growled Frontenac. "Let him mind his holy business in his own palace, while I mind my own damned business in the Castle of St. Louis!"

"Monsieur," said I, "why do you hate priests?"

"I love their bravery and devotion," said he, "and I detest their intrigues and politics." He got red and angry and took hold of my arm and shook it: "What the devil do the Jesuits care about turning a wilderness into an empire?" he demanded. "They want no empire save that of Christ alone! They care nothing for agriculture; for villages to be built; for forts, cities, docks, ships.

"Why, the stupid black-gowns care nothing even for education. No! On the contrary, they are against educating their savage converts—the better to keep them under their thumbs. They won't even teach the Indians the French language. All they want is their souls; and they care nothing else about them, or about New France!"

He began to walk about the quarter deck, grumbling and growling, and muttering that he'd soon put an end to all this.

"They have blocked four Governors who attempted to lay the foundations of empire, by exploring, civilizing, organizing these savages—by building roads, forts; by clearing the land for corn, for gardens, for pasture.

"If the Jesuits had their way nothing excepting convents, seminaries, and churches ever would be built in New France. If they had their way Canada would be ruled by their general and by his priests; and there'd be nobody left alive in the world except converts and martyrs! I know them. If they'll let me alone I'll let them alone. Otherwise—war!"

He gave my arm another vigorous shake and scowled at me: "Do you love Jesuits—or are you afraid of them?" he demanded.

"Neither, Monsieur. I revere bravery and faith—whatever the faith may be. And I love liberty and fear tyranny."

"Hah!" he cried, "those also are my own ideas, Stanhope! I will not endure tyranny. I wish I had power supreme to reform the whole world! I'd make a magnificent abode of this earth to the glory of God and to the joy and contentment of everybody! I'd frame laws—civil, military, religious, a universal policy and code—and anybody who thought differently from me had better never have been born!"

I began to laugh.

"What are you laughing at?" he asked.

"Monsieur, if you accomplished all this you would remain the only person on earth who was not oppressed by tyranny; the single and supreme tyrant!"

He gave me a red and angry look, then burst into a shout of laughter.

"By the golden beard of God Almighty," said he, "if I could make of the world an earthly paradise I'd be willing

and happy to die in the instant of accomplishment! That is the kind of tyrant I would be!"

"Monsieur," said I, "is not that also the creed and purpose of those brave Jesuit priests who tolerate no faith except their own?—who care nothing about dying—dying horribly if need be—if only they may impose that faith upon some pagan savage?"

"Damnation," said he, "you liken me to a Jesuit, and you make us both resemble tyrants! Am I a tyrant, then, if I build an empire and demand that all shall aid me and none oppose?"

"Not if you build your empire aided by free and willing hands; and if the first law of that same empire be liberty of mind and body."

"Hell and hot coals!" he shouted, "am I to blink and suck my thumb if others presume to make too free with my own empire!"

"After all," said I, "it is the King's."

"Yes," said Frontenac, "but he can't get at me to interfere with me before I set Canada in order. By the pretty blue eyes of the Virgin!" he cried, "all this is going to my head, Dick! Think what I have in my two hands—the making and organizing of half the world! It is stupendous! Incredible!"

"Once I had magnificent visions,—superb plans for beautifying my estate of Isle Savary. What a pitiful ambition!—the petty labour of an ant in a foot-path dragging grains of sand!"

"But now!—oh, God of the golden beard!—millions of square miles of wilderness to convert into a fertile, flowery civilization! Cities, villages, castles, roads, bridges to create out of shaggy forests and towering rocks! A thousand miles glittering with golden grain!"

"Docks, basins, ships, storehouses!—millions of tons of fish; a hundred thousand bales of precious furs—beaver

otter, mink!—And, by the blazing blade of the angel of Eden, a thousand glowing furnaces full of molten gold! Mines—iron, silver, copper, lead,—diamond-pits, opals, turquoises—and, oh, my Merciful Almighty Master!—vast quarries of marble—marbles veined with fire; marbles as white as translucent snow!—”

His lion's eyes were blazing and he took me by both shoulders in a grasp of steel:

“I care not to whom this new empire belongs as long as I create it!” he cried. “Let a viceroy be raised up out of Canada for all it matters to me. All I covet and desire is the power to create! I have the genius! I have the will! I shall not yield to any black-robe who desires only to save souls and who is content to leave this Western World the howling wilderness that God Almighty made it!”

He gave me a shake, then began to pace the quarter deck with the heavy liteness of a restless lion.

Presently: “I am hungry,” he growled. And, after a little, came and rested one hand upon my shoulder, looking down at the gun-deck abaft the main-mast. “Yonder,” said he, “walks a comely peasant girl—as fresh and dewy as a Normandy plum! She should be bred to some tall fellow . . . to breed soldiers for my new empire. . . . I would I were part Hercules, part Samson, part Solomon, and part Zeus. I'd people my own empire with real men, and raise a mighty race to garrison and defend it. . . . What Canada needs is ten thousand baby Frontenacs!”

He burst into shouts of laughter. The sturdy young peasant girl looked up at us from the gun-deck, with a gay, frank smile.

“My dear,” cried Frontenac, “a few hundred like you and me—and with plenty of good will—the children of New France would very soon rule the world! . . . What is your name?”

She framed her scarlet lips with both hands; and called back: "Fifine Dumont, Monsieur le Comte!"

"You want to get married?"

"If it please Monsieur the Count."

"Are you a novice?"

"Dame—I never had any children," she replied, blushing.

"Ha!" said he, "the first complaint to your new Governor. I shall give it my personal attention. After all, what is a government if it be not paternal!"

The girl's frank gaiety echoed his own roar of laughter.

"You see," he said to me, "I know how to play Jupiter, too, if need be. By the jewelled wings of God's archangels, I shall play the rôle of every god on Olympus if I must! . . . What did she say her name is?—"

Chapter XX

WHAT a stupendous world this Western Hemisphere—overwhelming, tremendous, solitary, savage! Terrible in its silence. . . .

Rocks, blackish forests, rivers as wide as seas. Such winds as are born at the earth's ends. Forests—forests! Mountains on far horizons—or clouds—for everywhere they are piled up alike, distant, misty, endless battlements along the sky-line.

No signs of life save some great bird in high and heavy flight.

Slashed across the wilderness of sombre pines like blood-red gashes, long streaks of scarlet foliage.

"Maple trees," said our Captain, "—from which sugar is made."

Beating slowly up a river flowing against us between rocks and forests dreadfully still. No sound in this New World save voices aboard us, flap of windy sail; creaking of spar and cordage; the purling flow of crystal waters under our slowly moving bow.

A strange little boat made of tree-bark, under our quarter. In it a dirty man clad in the fringed skin of a deer. Another in dingy dress and rusty buckles. They climb aboard us.

One is our pilot. Our sailors hoist in their tree-bark boat and turn it bottom-side up on our gun-deck.

From the very top of a pine-clad cliff falls a mass of roaring water into the vast river where we sail.

Beyond, a few low stone houses, whitewashed. Meadows here and there. A few cows.

Fishing craft to starboard. They hail us, far shouting. More tree-bark boats, called canoes. More little white-washed houses; more meadows; more fields of yellow grain.

Villages here and there; and the little belfries of tiny parish churches.

Upon the shore we can see people moving. Once, distantly, the wind bore to us the sound of a dog barking.

Whitewashed houses on either shore, now. . . . Fishing boats; a glimpse of a small log fort where a flag flew. Canoes following us—all around us—the folk in them laughing and singing as they paddle to keep pace with us. The waves from our cutwater set their tiny craft dancing and plunging. Always they are singing and laughing, and their paddles flash wet in the sunshine.

The Rock! Suddenly in view—a vast black cliff, lofty, enormous—with ramparts atop, and spires; and the broad white flag of France sewn over with golden lilies.

Beneath, water lapping the strand where a small town stretches under the shadow of the gigantic cliff.

Now, from high bastions, puffs of white cannon smoke; the deadened thud of the discharge. Noise of bells from steeples seen against the sky somewhere up there.

Bang! Bang! The explosion of our own cannon aboard us shakes and shocks us, plunging bulwark and mast into a swirling white vapour.

The shoreward sound of church bells sweeps us like a wind. There is singing ashore, and a vast, confused tumult—noises of drums, of shouting; clangour of trumpets from high walls.

“Oh, heaven,” cried a young “King’s girl,” crowding close to the rail beside me, “look at the savages!”

There they were awaiting us, all fluttering with feathers and daubed with scarlet and yellow paint, horrible, half naked, shaking their glittering weapons above their heads.

"Onontio! Onontio!" they howled: "Nai Onontio husa-haho!"

From the quarter deck Count Frontenac, dressed magnificently, and wearing steel corselet and spurred boots, stared at the first savages he ever had gazed upon.

Presently his grim, lion-visage relaxed; softened to a smile:

"I like them," he said.

Which was true. He liked Indians. An odd, strange sympathy drew him to these wild folk; drew them to him. He was the first Governor who could abide them; the first who, instinctively, understood them.

"What are they?" he asked our Captain who took off his hat to reply:

"Hurons, Ottawas, Abanakis, Monseigneur," replied the Captain.

"What is it they are shouting?"

"Onontio; the name they give all Governors of New France."

"And what do they say?"

"Hail, Onontio, who comes wearing a sword!"

"Ha!" said Frontenac, "they and I are destined to comprehend one another."

Our anchors splashed; our ship lay close off the lower town. The wharf swarmed with shouting people cheering their new Governor.

There was the Bishop of Canada in all his churchly pomp, followed by his ecclesiastical entourage carrying banners and singing.

There, ranged by themselves, the Jesuits stood like a black wall, their sombre, intelligent faces intent upon their Governor,—as though searching to penetrate his purpose toward them.

Extending their rank up the precipitous street leading to

the citadel, were nuns—nuns of the Hospital, the Hôtel Dieu, Ursulines. On the other side of the street were Recollet Fathers and Sulpitians from Montreal.

There, too, near the Sulpitians, was the Governor of Montreal and his guards, come to do reluctant and suspicious honour to Count Frontenac, and already jealous of his authority, sullenly resentful and uneasy.

Upon the wharf was ranged a battalion of infantry—militia of the Carignan Regiment—with all their old allure and discipline of regulars. Their drums were beating; their trumpets sounded a salute.

Opposite to them, and aligned with the dense throng of painted Indians, crowded a noisy, boisterous, unruly throng of sunburnt men dressed fantastically in deerskin shirts and Indian leggins and moccasins brilliant with beads. Their hair was wild and shaggy under their caps of otter, mink, and beaver fur; from their shoulders, arms, and legs fell cascades of buckskin fringes dyed yellow, scarlet, and purple.

"Who are those people?" inquired Count Frontenac.

"Monseigneur," replied the ship's Captain, "they display the greatest effrontery and impudence in daring to come to Quebec to welcome you. They are the Coureurs-de-Bois."

"Ha! Forest-runners! Outlaws!" said Frontenac, scowling. But I, who had learned to know him, detected a kind of leonine grin under his frowning mask.

"What do you think of that!" he demanded of me. "Did you ever hear of such impudence? Look at those brawny rascals yonder who trade without license—who rob the King of his fur trade!

"They range the woods like wolves. The King has outlawed every one of them and has ordered me to hang all I can catch. And—by the living God!—they swarm out of the forest to pay their respects to me!"

I began to laugh; and I saw his moustache quiver, and a gleam of teeth.

Said I: "They would make a splendid force of irregulars in time of need."

He suddenly roared with laughter, looking straight at the turbulent crowd of forest-runners; and they laughed back at him and flung up their caps and shook their muskets above their heads.

"Frontenac!" they shouted. "Onontio! He's a good fellow! Nai Onontio! Welcome to New France!"

He said to me, still laughing—"How can one hang such polite people, Stanhope? I have no stomach for it. Besides, I seem, somehow, to understand them—as I do our wild Indians. . . . And that's rather strange for a man who has passed his life in the most civilized and magnificent court in the world."

Our drums on the gun-deck began to beat; our trumpets sounded from the poop.

"So—we go ashore," murmured Frontenac, leaning carelessly upon the rail beside me. And, after a while, still unstirring amid the clamor of military music: "Yonder, among the savages, stands a pretty Indian girl. . . . Did ever you see any maid so wildly graceful? To love such a youngster would be like caressing a young leopard, I think."

"If you fancy any such for a night's frolic," said I, "you had better have them well washed."

"Yes, boiled," he muttered. Then, in his eyes, I saw the old, haunted look—loneliness and pain—and knew he was thinking of the only woman he had ever loved—and who did not love him.

"I'll have a dozen scrubbed. I'll have them parboiled for my seraglio. . . . That little wench aboard, too. And others of better quality. By God's golden sandals I'll become a Bashaw and raise a hundred sons to command a hundred

battalions in New France. . . . Only, as you say, a number of my mistresses will require parboiling."

The barge to take us ashore was now approaching. A gorgeous gentleman decked in silks and gold lace sat in the stern; and our Captain told us he was the Intendant.

"Ha!" said Frontenac, "so that is Monsieur Talon! Well, it remains with him whether he and I shall become friends."

Frontenac passed his arm through mine and, leaning slightly on me, descended the companion to the gun-deck.

"Stanhope," he murmured, "there is no pleasure in the world unless shared. Did you know that?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Well, it is true. There is no pleasure unless two who love share it. But, by the jewelled guard of God's gold sword!—there remains determination and temper. . . . The will to do; the satisfaction of strife! My way is my way. Let those beware who would block it! . . . I go forward. I go on and on and on. . . . Until I drop. Until age and decay betray me. . . . But, oh, Holy Virgin!—if I had but the strength of my brain's visions I would make of this world a bewildering bauble for God's pleasure, to toy with and amuse Him, and whereon He might see a million million people happy, healthy, contented, and praising Him day and night—"

He turned to smile and take off his hat to a row of rosy-faced King's girls drawn up to salute him as he went over the side to his barge.

"Ha!" said he, nudging me, "—there is another one with blue eyes—"

The roll of drums drowned his voice, but his lion's eyes flashed yellow as he laughed.

"The hurt heart may not be cured, but it may be cheated," said he. "But it takes a multitude of women to do it. . . . Until Monsieur Death pulls the curtains of the barren bed. Ai! his is the only cure for an ill like mine. . . . Well, then

—gai! En avant! God knows there's amusement enough awaiting me ashore among all those black-robcs and out-laws!"

He descended the stairs hanging to the ship's side, amid a roar of cannon and a bedlam of church bells and thousands of voices shouting: "Vive la France! Vive Frontenac!"

Thus came Frontenac into the fortress of Quebec.

A huge black Rock crawling with priests! A strange, stony city of churches, convents, barracks and forts perched upon it; ringed with lofty battlemented walls. Decaying bastions propped by palisades. A citadel with a château beginning to crack and crumble, patched with massive constructions half timber, half stone. The city wall pierced by gates poorly guarded and partly in ruins.

Under the shadow of this vast cliff, far below, a little town of stone and timber upon the strand. And, beyond, the great river with its islands, capes and bays, dark, unbroken barriers of woods—the stupendous forests of New France—black, sullen barriers against the sky walling in this little world with gigantic ramparts of living green.

To a man accustomed to the brilliance of civilization and the magnificence of the court of France, God knows what a stern and desolate and dingy spectacle seemed this naked, priest-haunted Rock with its stark spires and roofs and walls, and the clangour of its iron bells.

Scarcely, from the town far below, came the merrier tumult of music and human voices—the distant clatter of wooden shoes; laughter and cries of boatmen, and the pleasant noises from wharf, market, and stony street.

Frontenac said to me: "I feel like a falcon perched alone on this high crag, and filled with a fierce desire to strike."

"At what, Monsieur?"

"You ask me that? Look at the quarry! Look at the black-robcs, already devising my ruin! Ha! No sooner do

I land than I have both hands full of quarrels—full of trouble. The Bishop of Canada believes he rules here! The Governor of Montreal politely insults and defies me. The woods swarm with outlaw Coureurs-de-Bois ruining the fur trade. The English in New York send their Iroquois to murder us.

"I have no regular soldiers; I have no money. I need soldiers to drive the New Yorkers and the Bostonians into the sea! I need money to build new ramparts, gates, forts. Look at this château! It is falling down. It will crumble and bury you and me in its ruins!"

He began to pace the wooden gallery which ran around the upper windows of the Château St. Louis. Above us, on the roof, the great white banner flapped in the wind, its golden lilies glistening under a sky of superb blue.

"How am I going to make an empire out of all this?" he said passionately, sweeping city and horizon with a gesture:—"quarrels, jealousies, treason within; poverty, treachery, revolt without! They are all against me—church, Bishop, clergy, Montreal, Three Rivers—all lie to me, swindle me, defy me.

"What am I to do without soldiers and without money? What else is there to work with, Stanhope?"

"Power!"

"Ha!" he exclaimed. "By the gilded wings of St. Michael, you are right. Power!"

"Power. Let the clergy, the Intendant, the Montreal Government, learn who is master of Canada. Then placate the forest-runners."

"And then?"

"Win over or exterminate the Iroquois. Drive the witch-burning New Englanders into the sea. Until you clean out violence and tyranny from the New World you cannot build your empire, Monsieur."

Frontenac began to laugh, and his tawny eyes sparkled:

"Very well," said he, "you shall play St. Michael to my Almighty, and I will send you to spank the devil out of anybody who thwarts me."

He took me by the arm and led me from the balcony into his own suite of apartments. It was time for him to dress for the great banquet which he was offering to the officials, nobility, clergy, and rich merchants of Canada. His valets had laid out for inspection some superb garments. Still resting his arm within mine, he chose, with a sort of childish delight, a wonderful suit of blue and gold.

A servant brought a flask of Spanish wine and two glasses; and he made me drink with him to the success of his new Government.

Then we went to see the banquet hall which really was a beautiful room, stately and charming as a salon of St. Germain, with its rich hangings and gilded furniture, its mirrors and crystal lustres.

"Dick," he said, "I shall organize New France like a Royal Province, and so govern it with all the ceremony, pomp, and magnificence worthy of a viceroy."

"I shall make of Quebec a little St. Germain or Versailles. I shall turn this château into a real palace. Ha! You shall see these halls and corridors brilliant with silks and laces and jewels! By heaven, if these rotten old walls fall down, they shall bury beauty and magnificence and neither rags nor cassocks!"

He roared with laughter and swept the great salon with a gesture:

"I, Frontenac, know how to live and how to govern; and if others do not, why, then, they shall learn from me!"

Chapter XXI

I REALIZE, now, that an honest narrative of what one has seen in this world must necessarily be a memoir; and that, so far, I have written in that manner.

I had not meant to write thus. My purpose was to tell you about the greatest man I ever knew—one of the greatest who ever had lived in our times—Frontenac—show you the man as I saw and understood him in his greatness and his weakness. But I do not know how to do this unless I also continue to show you myself and try to paint for you something of the times, the place where Louis de Frontenac suffered defeat and then grew truly great; the people with whom I, as well as he, had to do.

So, first, I have to tell you that no sooner did Count Frontenac arrive in New France than he upset it and everybody in it like a tray of toys. With every official and every ecclesiastic in Canada he quarreled, save only with the Recollet Fathers. He quarreled with our neighbours, the English and Dutch, with their Governors, their soldiers, their inhabitants.

The fundamental cause of all these misunderstandings and uproars was that he wished to tell everybody in the world what to do and how to do it.

Not from vanity alone nor from a meddlesome disposition; but because Louis de Frontenac really was great, and he really *did* know what to do and how it should be done.

He was the most far-seeing man of his age; the hesitations and stupidities of kings, ministers, statesmen, priests, made him contemptuously impatient or drove him frantic.

With autocratic powers he could and would have made of

the New World a French Empire stretching from ocean to ocean and from the Arctic to the Gulf.

His was the wisdom of sages, and the foresight of prophets; his voice a lion's roar in the wilderness! And none regarded it.

Because he had for a master a King densely ignorant of religion and in terror of hell; and the bigoted woman who ruled this King drove out of France a million French people—the very bone and blood and sinew of the nation—at the very moment when the whole world was rising to overthrow France and *Le Roi Soleil*.

He had for his enemy Rome. Because Rome desired only to make of this new Western World an empire of redeemed souls reigned over by God's Regent on earth; and otherwise leave the Continent as it was when discovered—a wilderness policed by Jesuits.

When Count Frontenac desired to organize into a Government the clergy, the noblesse, the middle classes, the peasantry, of this New World, and weld all into a powerful, coherent nation, his autocratic King sent word to him that he, the King, was all the Government that New France required, and that Monsieur de Frontenac had better cease his constructive activities and try to stop quarreling with the clergy.

I remember very well when the first of these admonitory letters arrived from Colbert in the spring of 1673, following the autumn of our arrival at Quebec.

I was at my new manor house, or Seigniory, of Auros, in the parish of that name,—the King of France, prodded by my father, being sufficiently complacent to invest me with both manor and title.

The Iroquois had murdered the Chevalier d'Auros and his wife and children, which is why the vacancy had been bestowed upon me—a thrifty gift to please Prince Rupert—because poor d'Auros left nothing in France and his line was extinguished when he was.

Well, as I say, I was down by the River at my Seigniory of Auros—a small, whitewashed, stone house—laying out the garden which the late seignior had neglected.

It was a most beautiful morning in early May; I had seen the great ship from France come in the day before,—witnessed the debarkation of all those new colonists, soldiers, settlers, priests, nuns, and the comely peasant girls sent out by the King as wives to those in the colony who needed them.

I expected no letters. Who was there to write to me? As for the cargo—the bales of goods, laces, silks, linens, weapons, nursery stock, seeds, cattle, fowls, farm utensils,—these had not yet been unloaded; and it would be days before anything could be landed, allotted, or displayed for sale in the shops of the lower town. But it was the farm and flower seeds and nursery stock from France that interested me.

So, with my farmer and gardener, that lovely May morning, I was out with tape and stake and spade and hoe to plan how best to set new grape vines, new fruit trees, strawberries, currants, herbs; and where to sow vegetable seed and where to set the plants when they came up.

Flower borders, too, I desired; and was laying the tape to measure out a bed under my southern windows, when there came the noise of horses; and, hurrying around, I saw Count Frontenac ride up with two soldiers of his guard, dismount, and come striding through my gate and into my garden.

He seemed to be too angry to speak. I noticed that; and the ominous flecks of foam at the corners of his mouth.

We went into the house together. There he slammed the outer door, pulled a letter from his belt, and thrust it under my nose in speechless rage.

The letter was from Colbert; moderate in tone. The King scolded him very gently and requested him to control his temper, live at peace with clergy and officials, and not exceed the authority with which his King had invested him.

Money and soldiers, however, were refused him on plea of expenses and troops necessary for the war in Holland. He was told to economize.

It was this, apparently, that had enraged him. He began to stamp about the bare room where we stood, shouting at the rafters and gesticulating.

"What damage can I do to the Iroquois without troops!" he yelled at me. "They are ruining the fur trade! They've scared my Hurons and Ottawas; they've diverted the fur trade to Albany! Instead of trading for French brandy with us they trade for rum with the English! The King must be crazy. What other income has he from Canada excepting from the fur trade? Does he wish to stop his own income? Damnation!"

"I came here a ruined man; and I need to mend my fortunes. If the King's income stops, so does mine!"

"Sir," said I, surprised, "is it not forbidden that any official engage in trade?"

"Ha! Am I to regard such petty restrictions and live on a beggarly salary because I happen to belong to the noblesse?" he cried. "No! Am I to stand idle while all these priests make their fortunes in peltry? Look at the Bishop and his Seigniori of Beaupré. He came here poor; he is the richest man in Canada—one of the richest in France today! Why may I not mend my own fortunes?"

"I shall cheat nobody; but I shall take my just commissions of which everybody conspires to rob me—yes, everybody, bishop, Jesuit, official, and that damned Governor of Montreal and his fat Sulpitians—"

He slammed himself onto a chair and the room rang with the clash of his half-armor, sword and spurs.

"My God, Dick," he said, "there really is nothing mean and selfish in me, and I am willing to forego any personal advantage—willing to strip myself naked and die in rags—if only my King will give me troops enough and money

enough to pay them so that I can put in their proper places these beggarly English and their accursed Iroquois—these witch-burning Cromwell Puritans of Boston, and the Albany Dutchmen and their murderous pack of wolves called Iroquois! . . . This is but a hollow shell, this Government of New France—a puff-ball upon which any man may set his heel and explode it in a cloud of empty dust!

“Today, if they had the courage, the English might stamp us out. Today, with sufficient enterprise, the Iroquois could overwhelm us.

“What have I got to govern?” he shouted. “What kind of empire is this ridiculous country? What is Quebec?”

“A rock, alive with priests and covered with churches, monasteries, seminaries, convents!

“Where are my forts? Do you call that rotten castle up there a fort? Or the fortified mills at Three Rivers and at Montreal? Or the block houses in the parishes?

“Where are the palaces? Look up there at what they call a *château*! That’s the Governor’s palace! The *Château St. Louis*! Leaning against the fort like a cow-shed against a barn!

“I ask for a little money to keep it from collapsing and burying me while I’m in bed! But no—not an *écu*! I ask for a few pistoles to patch up that fortress. Colbert scolds me. I beg for a few soldiers, and for money to pay them. Oh, no, no, no! There’s a war in Holland, it seems, and all the money is needed to buy gold lace, ribbons, and snuff-boxes for the army there!”

I said: “Certainly, without money and troops, it is not possible to defend this Government or to develop here an empire.”

He took his head between his gloved hands and stared out of the little leaded window panes.

“Dick,” he said, “everything is wrong here. Few, except

the priests, came here willingly; few would remain if they could get away.

"The trouble is with the people. In the beginning everybody desired to get rich immediately without doing any work. Now, all desire to enrich themselves by trading in furs and in brandy.

"Nobody wishes to farm the land or to work in the fisheries. Disbanded soldiers make poor farmers. As for the peasants who came—or were sent—here, they do not wish to remain peasants. No. They call themselves habitants. And they avoid all the work they can, and think only of fête days and fiddles and fine clothes for their women. That is what the French peasant has become in New France, —a lazy, pleasure-loving, improvident fellow who loves to feast and dance and strut about in militia uniform, and keep a little shop instead of tilling the soil and raising sufficient grain and cattle to feed New France. These damned clodhoppers—"

"That is partly so," said I. "But it is not entirely the fault of these poor folk."

"No," he said. "With their parish priests I find no fault; but I detest the Jesuits who desire to make of this land only a spiritual empire. They care nothing for the bodily welfare of the peasant. They never encourage labour, agriculture, fisheries,—the building of towns. No. They ask only for more convents, more churches."

"Still," said I, "it is what they believe in. The Kingdom of Christ alone. And they die very willingly for their belief."

"Courage is common to everybody," growled Frontenac, who couldn't conceive otherwise. "But these Jesuits are bigoted fools. That's the trouble,—this whole country is populated with fools. Look at the noblesse. What jackasses! A noble seignior in every seigniory,—lazy, penniless, his toes peeping at you through his boots and no seat to his

breeches,—but a plume in his hat!—oh, yes!—proud, starving, idle, vain, ridiculous!—”

“Gentlemen are forbidden to engage in labour,” I remarked.

“Damnation! Who is to feed these noble fowl who sit around in their empty manor houses like soiled birds that have lost their tail feathers! And who go strutting and starving about, taking off their tarnished hats to one another as though they were still at St. Germain!”

He smiled and glanced around the bare room where we sat. At least it was clean and the hearth swept.

“A fine pot of soup,” he muttered, “—where the seignior receives his seigniorship direct from the King, and then rents his manor farms to his tenant farmers who can’t pay rent because they won’t till the soil! Naturally he starves; naturally they starve! And, in consequence, Quebec starves. Three Rivers, and Montreal, and the côtes; and all New France! So that the King is always digging his hand into Colbert’s pockets to search for money to buy grain for this land of lazy fools and priests,—into which he has poured so many millions of bushels of food! It’s disgusting! How long is he going to continue? And his fur trade stopped or diverted; and Montreal stealing from him every pistole of the income due him; and the free traders, free brandy-sellers, free forest-runners, and every backwoods vagabond robbing him—yes—and robbing the honest folk of Quebec—of the furs which ought to be marketed here!”

He got up and began to stride angrily to and fro.

“All these fooleries perplex and enrage me,” he cried. “Look at Perrot whom the Fathers of St. Sulpice have made Governor of Montreal! And who pretends he is equal to me in rank! I’ll teach him and his soldiers and Sulpitians who it is that rules New France!”

“Why did they name him Governor of Montreal? Because they want to stop my Hurons and Ottawas on the upper

lakes and steal the King's furs! That damned Perrot who waters his brandy and trades like a dirty shop-keeper.

"Look at Laval! Can you tell me how a priest can honestly become so indecently rich?

"Everybody swindles me; everybody interferes with me.

"I try to organize a municipal government in this crazy city of Quebec; I order the public election of three aldermen to replace the syndic; I order that the people hold a public meeting every six months to discuss questions concerning their own welfare. The King disapproves! Well, then, I convoke the council; administer to them and to everybody the oath of allegiance; I organize the Three Estates—the three orders—clergy, nobles, merchants and citizens; and I make still another separate body of the council and the magistrates. It was a superb ceremony! You attended. A magnificent spectacle! What came of it?" he shouted furiously, banging his sword-hilt on the table.

"Monsieur Colbert reproved you," said I, "because the King's desire is to become absolute with nothing between him and the people to modify his will of them. Which," I added in a low voice, "is the kind of behaviour that ruined Charles the First of England."

Frontenac halted in his nervous stride and gave me an astonished look.

"Don't let anybody else hear you talk that way," he said. . . . "I ought to send you to the Château."

"You ought to take hold of New France and make a real nation of it—no matter what the King says—" said I.

He turned very red: "That's treason," he said; "and you can thank God you're talking to a friend who understands and loves you!"

"Well," said I, "go on as you're going, then. Let Perrot swindle the King, and you, and everybody else. Let the Abbé Fénelon trick you, and the Bishop fatten on you, and

the Coureurs-de-Bois cheat you of the fur trade, and the Iroquois carry pelts to the English and Dutch!"

"Dick, do you mock me?"

"No. I venture to advise you to send soldiers to Montreal and arrest Perrot. Then build a fort at Cadaraqui on Lake Ontario. That frees the fur trade and checks the Iroquois—two birds at a shot."

Frontenac's features had been changing while I spoke. Suddenly he burst into a loud, delighted laugh.

"Ha!" he cried, "that is exactly what I have done! I have sent that sober-faced man, the Cavalier de la Salle, to build me a fort precisely at Cadaraqui! I have sent Lieutenant Bizard and three of my guardsmen with a letter to Perrot that is likely to teach him who is the Governor General of New France.

"If I had any soldiers I'd go to Montreal and arrest all that band of robbers—Perrot, d'Urfé, Fénelon, Brucy, Carion and his forest-runners— But where are my soldiers? I can't trust the militia to do this. I've only my guards. And all those folk in Montreal are disbanded regular soldiers. Besides, I don't wish to begin a civil war with such people—and those rascally fur-traders and forest vagabonds. No." He gazed at me complacently, licking his lips like a fed lion.

"Nevertheless," said I, "it would be well to get hold of Perrot. If you'll send *me*—"

"Patience," smiled Frontenac who never had any himself—"I have my ideas regarding your employment."

He was in good spirits, now. He talked about the great ship, *Rose of the North*, which had come in from France; we discussed its cargo of settlers and goods, neither of which had yet been landed.

"After all," he said, "these poor folk are French; and the French are good people at heart. Gently, Dick, gently with them. After all, I am their father. I must teach them; I must try to obtain money to help them.

"Come, then; you have done well here at Auros. Yours is becoming a model seigniorship for the noblesse to observe and imitate—the lazy, ragged rascals! And you are teaching your farmer tenants to till the soil."

"I am trying to," said I. "God knows I am ignorant enough myself—"

"Well, then, you teach them industry, anyway; and they tell me you forego your rents and tell your tenants to put the money into their fields."

"Dame! I can't starve them, Monseigneur—"

"No. But Perrot can— There, I'll not lose my temper again. No! And when seed and stock are distributed, and when things are going well at Auros,—so that you can leave your seigniorship without damage,—then, Dick, I shall have employment for you."

"And what is that to be, sir?"

"Very well, you shall know now. I have sent that solemn youngster, La Salle, to build me a fort at Cadaraqui, and call it Fort Frontenac.

"I shall send you, who have been a soldier, to Saint Sacrement."

"Good heavens," said I, "to what purpose?"

"To find me a site for a fort, pardieu!"

"A fort!"

"To stop the leakage on the River Richelieu and bolt out the Iroquois and lock in my rascally Coureurs-de-Bois. Which will be like a kick in the stomach for Albany and New York. Also, it will make those old Round Heads of Cromwell in Boston very sick. Ha!"

He laughed, flung an arm around my shoulder, and discoursed merrily of his plans to drive English and Dutch into the sea and make of the wild and murderous Iroquois a humble and tributary people.

We went out, presently, and he was interested to see what I was doing in my garden. Nothing on earth was uninterest-

ing to this man so full of fiery energy and restless intelligence.

Here he was, without money or troops, poor, alone in a poor land torn by internal jealousies, riddled with corruption, paralyzed by the autocratic edicts of a King who, himself ignorant and superstitious and in dread of hell hereafter, was governed by a woman who was driving a million honest folk out of France because they did not worship God as she wished them to.

If only these Huguenots had been permitted to come to Canada!— But Madame de Maintenon would not permit that. In fact, orders came to drive from Canada all heretics. But there was none. Or, like myself, those who went to mass and bided their time and believed in the day that religious freedom and toleration for all beliefs would make of Canada a free and mighty empire.

Frontenac walked over to his horse and got into the saddle. He was in high spirits again.

“Have you had any letters by the new ship?” he enquired.

“None, Monseigneur. Who would remember me to write me a letter?”

“Poor Dick! Well, then, I have a letter from my wife! She is happy and hopes that I am. She is active in my behalf and has grand ideas for me. Is she not kind, Dick?”

“Always charming, sir.”

“Ah,” he cried, “she is, indeed! God bless her. I love her so—I can’t ever make her understand. . . . No, she never has understood. . . . She does not mean to be cruel—but—I have been lonely. . . . I think I am the loneliest man on earth. . . . Well, nevertheless—gai! One must live on and learn to laugh and cheat the devil. Yes!”

He laughed and looked down at me from his saddle: “Have you found a pretty mistress, Dick? Or several?”

“None, Monsieur.”

"Well, then, we must mend that! But it's your fault. You will not come to the Château. You shall! It's a charming and ceremonious little court I hold. There are attractive women there who would look handsome even at St. Germain! . . . As for me—ha!" He twisted his tawny moustache into a victorious pair of points and gave me a lion's grin.

"Allons," said he, "I ride to the ship to hasten the unloading. My wife sends me rich clothing which I am in a passion to see. Come to the Château and we shall examine it together. . . . And, Dick!"—calling back as he swung his horse,—“you shall have of my new clothing what suit pleases you—or all of them—every rag, by God!”

He rode away at a gallop followed by his guards.

Chapter XXII

THE arrival of the great ship, *Rose of the North*, had brought to Quebec a multitude from Three Rivers and Montreal and from all the côtes and parishes and seigniories along the great river from Tadousac to Lake St. Louis.

Ship-day was fête day in New France.

All Quebec turned out and swarmed down to the wharves along the lower town. Everywhere the narrow streets were thronged with farmers, sailors, merchants, soldiers, guards, priests, nuns,—with great ladies and their demure maids-in-attendance; with farmers' wives, pretty girls from shops, gay, rosy-cheeked peasant girls, gipsy, bedizened forest consorts of trappers and Coureurs-de-Bois—slim, dark-eyed girls with the sinuous carriage of lithe wild things—and the dangerous grace of them. And there were Indians in their feathers, gauds, and ceremonial paint—Hurons, Ottawas, Abanakis, Delawares—gorgeous in barbaric finery, moving about with a kind of slow and stupid dignity or standing as still as autumn-tinted trees by the battery of cannon, to stare at passing skiffs, boats, canoes, and at the great ship swinging there at her moorings and surrounded by a vast swarm of boats.

Through increasing crowds strutted the shabby seigniors of the manors who had come even from as far as Chambly and La Chine—to patronize with their notice, though not with money—the arrival of the *Rose of the North*. To one another they were continually taking off their battered hats with all the gravity and manner of Versailles; and they were forever bowing, swaggering and circling around one another

like a flock of starving pigeons. Never a saucy maid passed them but they puffed out their lean wishbones and trailed their swords in gallant recognition.

Dear, dingy comrades of the côtes, I look back at you through the years—through sunshine and storm and the bloody mists of horrors indescribable—and I see you strutting in your patched and tarnished finery, scrawny as the Knight of La Mancha, ribbed like Rosinante; hungry and gay; sans culottes but courteous.

You were ridiculous and gallant; grotesque and valiant, O penniless preux cavaliers of the côtes!—starving with dignity and without complaint because you did not know how to beg or how to work.

It was the Bishop of Quebec who owned the rich Seigniorship of Beaupré; and the Seigniorship of Beauport belonged to Giffard. I did not see these worthies in the lower town that day.

But I encountered and saluted the solemn young proprietor of La Chine, and the gaunt and ragged lords of Longueuil, Varennes, and Contrecoeur, and of Duelle and St. Anne.

Hats in hand, our swords tilted rakishly, we paused for a moment's courteous conversation—grave inquiry concerning health, a passing mention of the ship, polite comment upon the weather, a compliment at parting, a flourish of rusty hat and faded plume. *Au revoir! Adieu!*

Contrecoeur told me with a whimsical smile that his hundred arpents brought him, in revenue, about twenty francs a year, partly paid in eggs and live capons.

"And how one is to live upon that for a year, Monsieur, is really quite a problem," he added gaily as he strutted away twisting up his little black moustache, with his bold eye on a councillor's pretty wife.

Ensign Moras, not of the titled noblesse but a gentilhomme, and Seignior of a new manor near Three Rivers, remarked to me that his total revenue was half a pint of wheat

for each arpent. He made a gay jest of his own attenuated face and figure:

"What the devil!—nobody can become a Gargantua on that; but it permits one to save on cloth for a suit!" And, laughing at his own grim jest, he swaggered off in pursuit of a pair of blue eyes that had regarded him mischievously from between a saucy cap and a pale blue fontange.

I strolled about among the gaping, good-natured crowd of young peasant lads who stood craning their sunburned necks to look across the water at the King's girls gathered on the deck of the banner-hung ship.

They had arrived, as usual, to marry among the young men of Canada, and to help them with their plowing, seeding, milking. I heard one tall lad say: "As for me, I want the fattest and healthiest. Dame! I have thirty arpents to clear and twenty more to cultivate; and my eel-pots to see to also. That's why I want a horse of a girl for a wife, *nom de Dieu!* Oui, dame! Give me shoulders and hips and a pair of legs well planted! And you can keep your Marquises for somebody who prefers bird-seed to beef!"

As I walked slowly along the quay, passing a parcel of big, bony lads in their Indian finery, fringed buckskins, and fur caps, who were quarreling with soldiers of Monsieur de Frontenac's guards, I loitered to look at the painted Mission Indians, naked in their gaudy blankets. Then the fat landlord of the Silver Ship, tavern, waddled out to pay his respects to me and inform me that the *Rose of the North* had brought a letter for me which was lying in his tap-room.

He offered to fetch it, but I went into the tavern, commanded a draught of St. Charles beer, and sat down at a table by the leaded window to read my letter which was sealed with a lozenge I did not recognize.

When I opened it I smiled. It was from Jeanne Hérouard, Countess Palladine. I had not thought of her in many months:

MONSIEUR:

Nearly a year has passed and I am still of the same mind to make you suffer for your cruelty to me.

I begin now by assuring you that I no longer love you. This will vex you, I think, because all men are vain and wish to be adored whether or not they love in return.

Also, I am twelve years of age today, and am becoming beautiful and desirable. I know this because they tell me so. Also, I have plenty of mirrors in Madame de Frontenac's apartments.

Young men already look more than carelessly at me; and I begin to notice a certain gallantry in their respectful behaviour. Which is agreeable to me; and, I think, will annoy you. I do not go to Court; I am too young. Besides, Madame de Frontenac does not go. But she is the most popular and most courted woman in France. Her position is second to none, and her salon always is thronged by the cleverest and most powerful and fashionable folk in the land. There is no salon like ours. Monsieur de Saint Simon says so. I think you will regret that you are not here.

Monsieur, although I no longer entertain for you an ardent passion, I am still interested in your fortunes and remember you with a kindness which you scarcely deserve.

For, after all, had it not been for you, my head would have been dangling among the oranges on an orange tree. A Hérouard does not forget a kindness even if her gratitude is scorned.

Therefore, Monsieur, I write you a letter of polite inquiry concerning your health, your fortunes, and whether, by chance, you have married anybody. Particularly, the English woman with whom you were in love. You will be courteous to write me a letter in precise reply.

Permit me, Monsieur, to subscribe myself with every compliment and respect,

Your obliged and obedient servant,

JEANNE.

I never wrote to Jeanne Hérouard. I meant to, God forgive me.

But that year, when my plowing was done and my seeds were planted, Count Frontenac asked me to make the dangerous journey through the wilderness to Saint Sacrement.

And now I have to relate to you a strange event which proved to be the turning point in my career. When first I came to Canada the vast black wall of forest awed and disturbed me who had seen only the sunny open woods of the Old World. I did not like it and kept away from it. And, little by little, the daily sight of these sombre and sullen walls—these gigantic, sunless, living barriers, aroused in me both fear and hatred.

You understand, therefore, that I entered into that gloomy world unwillingly; but I went because I loved Count Frontenac and was loyal to him, and wished to aid him against his enemies with such poor talents and abilities as I possessed.

And now, mark me well!—for, within a week, the wilderness had seduced me; I became a victim to its enchantment; the magic of its savage beauty; the menace in its brooding mystery; its loneliness, its perils, threats—the terror of its awful silence; the painted spectres that flitted through its aisles, hell's own ghosts and phantoms of the pit—all these fascinated me, seized upon my mind and imagination, absorbed me.

It is true that I never was born a farmer. There were no joys for me in husbandry. I knew it now. Nor was I born to become even a civilized and professional soldier. No! There was savagery in me. My lines lay not in pleasant places—neither in cities where men of learning and attainment gathered, and where, amid brightness and gaiety and plenty, were opportunity and reward.

Nor lay my lines amid the armies wherein I had seen some little service; no, not in scientific and stately sieges, ordered battles, endless marches through long campaigns where civ-

ilizations were ever and violently destroying other civilizations which already had ruined remoter ones.

I knew within the first fortnight after I had entered the Northern wilderness that I was destined to love it—every tree, every rock, every brook and hill and leaf and river; that here was where my heart most passionately inclined; that already—by virtue of my first baptismal cup of water from an icy mountain spring—I had been christened and dedicated to my true vocation; and belonged within these dim, high, cathedral-arches—an acolyte amid the incense of its pillared pines.

The wilderness whispered to me, revealing its Creator: all that was worthy within me responded in a passion of adoration.

Thus, even before I was well on my journey to Lake Saint Sacrament, I had become a convert; and had, in my heart, renounced any career amid the world of men and affairs which I had begun to plan for myself, in my manor house of Auros.

But I did not at the time understand the true intensity of my feeling; did not realize the finality of my dedication to the Woodland God. No, I was merely becoming aware of the spell of the wilderness,—becoming happy in its vast liberties, thrilled with contentment because I knew not where I should lay my head at night; and happy to wonder where my errant feet should pass upon the morrow.

You see! the magic philter of the forest springs was changing the very blood in my veins to that restless current that seethes in the bodies of all forest vagabonds.

I did not suspect that already it was unfitting me for the calm and sober order of civilized endeavour.

Thus, with two forest-runners, and a painted Wyandotte guide, I came to Lake Saint Sacrament. And there found several good situations for forts to block the Iroquois and

English. And remained away from Quebec until the autumn had turned the mountain maples scarlet; and the sapphire-tinted jays screamed in the giant oaks.

That was the beginning of a profound and utter change in me. For, no sooner had I left the forest, than I needed it; and could not sleep well in my bed at Auros, but lay awake and listened to the distant winds.

Count Frontenac always was in need of me. I went on a mission, for him, to Cadaraqui, and to the upper lakes. And, this time, was gone a year!

He had come to trust and depend on me as he trusted Monsieur de la Salle; and he had no secrets from me but freely revealed his mind; and called upon me for forest service continually.

This was not well for me, nor profitable as far as it concerned my manor of Auros and my husbandry. It taught me something of the Huron and Algonquin languages; much of forest politics and of the true condition of affairs in the New World and the Old.

But, alas! it gave me a fatal and final distaste for the arts of peace which I had designed to cultivate at Auros. It aroused within me a slumbering thirst for excitement so that, after a while, I could not settle down at Auros at all, or even enjoy myself with the gaieties of the Château and the hospitalities offered me by others of my own caste in Quebec.

For now, having thoroughly tasted its delights, the forest became my master; and it was ever calling and commanding me. The distant stirring of vast winds, the noise of viewless waters summoned me where I walked in my sunny garden. Visions of remote and beloved mountains arose like phantoms before my brooding eyes; the wild sweetness of windy rivers haunted me. I came to hate the harrow and the plow. For, when at Auros, all forest hardships were forgot as soon as I had slept once more in my own

bed. Hunger, thirst, peril, sickness—all, all were forgot; and I remembered only the magic and golden gloom of trees where no sun penetrated save only along lost lakes and unknown rivers; and I longed for solitudes where there was sorcery in the silence; witchery in the far thunder of cataracts; and in the endless, ever present menace of murder—a charm—God help me!—but it was so.

Thus, year after year, I served Count Frontenac. And became, at heart, the veriest forest vagabond who desired only lawless freedom, and was only content to sleep far from the city's noise and the sound of church bells in Quebec.

In this manner passed my early youth in the New World, year after year, serving my Governor as deputy, ranging the wilderness in his behalf and at his behest; and only at brief intervals in touch with the capital, Quebec, and with the Château St. Louis.

And it was thus that, as my youth and early manhood passed, I caught glimpses of the passing pageant of the decade—brief flashes of its brilliance, its comedy and tragedy; and of Perrot's sordid drama; and of the fall of Fénelon.

I was only twenty-two years old when I had arrived in New France in the autumn of 1672. And during the following ten years I witnessed in these forest glimpses the struggle of a tireless, courageous man to make a nation out of a few settlements full of gay, vain, lazy people who worked when they were obliged to but preferred not to work at all.

Not all. Some were industrious; fishermen, farmers, artisans, shop-keepers worthy of respect.

And, along the côtes, the parish priests were their humble, brave, devoted aids and mentors.

But the shabby, bedraggled, half-starved nobles did little to help themselves in their dilapidated manors—too proud

or too ignorant to gain their bread by anything except the sword.

There was not military employment enough in the Government to afford these idlers a livelihood. Their sons, also, became idle, quarrelsome, dangerous fellows who took as naturally as fox-cubs to forest-running and a wild and reckless life. Yes, I mean the very sons of the proud nobility of France, titled and untitled. The forests were full of them with their slim, tawny mistresses, living like very vagabonds, carrying on illicit traffic in furs and brandy; fighting one another, murdering friendly Indians, setting up their own forts and trading stations, maintaining corrupt communication with Albany and New York.

I witnessed, also, in brief glimpses, something of Count Frontenac's endless struggle against the arrogant clergy who thwarted him, blocked his measures, intrigued against him, plotting to be rid of him.

I witnessed something of his disputes with the Montreal Government which tried to bully and extinguish him; I heard of his quarrels in council in his own Government; his energetic demands upon the King and Colbert that he be given authority to fashion for them an empire; his tireless requests for money, for troops, for power.

I witnessed and aided to conduct his dealing with the Hurons, the Ottawas, the Abanakis; and with the Iroquois. He had almost gained these wolves who already called him "Father." He was the only Governor they ever had respected. He would not permit them to address him as "Brother." They liked him and feared him. He was the great Onontio—greater than Corlear. And had the King given him authority and means he finally would have controlled Iroquois and Huron and Algonquin, and have made of them an impenetrable barrier against English aggression.

I saw him whenever I wished to—at all hours—at any

hour of the day and night when I was at my manor house of Auros. He never changed in his manner toward me; always I found him the same—fiery, brave, affectionate; intelligent, active and dauntless. Opposition always maddened him; but he was as eager as a child for kindness and understanding. He loved loyalty; he was ever kind to me.

In war he was not more cruel than any soldier in that cruel wilderness. If he delivered prisoners to the savages it was because he had to. In peace he was courteous, generous, loyal, and full of that inextinguishable gaiety of heart that advancing years never quenched.

Yes, as I say, I watched the fight between this man and fate—Frontenac on the one side; and church and state and a bigoted old woman at Versailles on the other.

The woman won. Old Maintenon! Count Frontenac was recalled by his King. And he went home to France as poor and as undaunted as when he had arrived in the New World; already an old man, but more fiery than ever, unsubdued, dangerous, irreconcilable.

I did not know he had been recalled. I was at Cadaraqui, in my gay forest dress of deerskin, bearing to the sullen Iroquois a message from Count Frontenac which placated them and yet imposed his will upon them.

And God knows that never had Canada so needed Count Frontenac as on that day he sailed for France—recalled to poverty and idleness and a wife who loved him not, by that accursed woman, Maintenon, and her wicked priest, Père La Chaise; and by a superstitious King afraid of hell!

When I learned that Count Frontenac had sailed for France I knew that New France was ruined and must presently fall a prey to the Iroquois first, and then to the English in New York and the fierce Puritans of Boston.

In my grief and rage I strove to think of some way in which Canada might be saved from all that had throttled

her, and which now menaced her with destruction—clergy and officials; Iroquois and English.

In despair I consulted La Forêt, commanding at Fort Frontenac; I sought out Greysolon, chief of the Coureurs-de-Bois; I wanted to drive out the bigots, the corrupt, the idle, and gather a hardy, devoted company of warriors to erect and defend a new-born nation which was to become a sanctuary for the oppressed and a citadel for all who loved liberty of mind and body. . . . Poor fool that I was who did not understand that it was the old witch of Versailles who was accomplishing the ruin of New France, and that it was hopeless to oppose her and her hell-fearing King who was striving, now, to buy a place in heaven with the blood and tears of a million wretched heretics.

It is strange how, when one is thinking of something, it suddenly happens.

I was sitting all alone in my nearly empty room in my manor house at Auros when one of my farmer-tenants fetched me a letter from France.

"What is this?" said I in astonishment; "has a ship come in and I not know it?"

"No, Monseignior," said he; "a forest-runner from Sorel brought in this letter which must, therefore, have come by ship to New York or Boston, and thence carried to Fort Orange where this fellow was hanging around with other fur-stealing rascals of his own kind."

"I care not," said I bitterly, "if the poor devil takes the liberty to labour for his bread in the green groves which God has planted to pleasure all mankind—and not kings alone! . . . Give the fellow this"—I held out a handful of silver—"and thank him in my behalf for his politeness and fidelity."

When my tenant went away I opened my letter, the seal of which carried the arms of Frontenac:

MONSIEUR,

Here at Court, neglected, idle, I eat my heart out and think of Canada and of all I had so nearly accomplished and was obliged to leave undone.

When I came back here the King gave me a little money. Very little. And now has forgotten me. Well, I sit here all alone and watch my sword rust. I am not young. Perhaps this is the end.

But by the silver wings of all the cherubim, I will not have it so! No! I am the first soldier of France. Turenne has said it! Only I had not learned how to attack and beat the Jesuits when I was in Canada. Now I know how. Yes! And I know how to take an Intendant by the ears and pull his nose!

Dick, tell me how it goes with the darling of my heart, Fort Frontenac—the Key to Canada. Is La Salle there? God bless him! Is La Forêt there? Brave soul! Or has La Barre ruined them?

And is L'Huht still ranging the forests in his buckskin dress with his impudent devils of Coureurs-de-Bois whom I ought to have hung on every tall pine from Tadousac to Sorel? What a strange tenderness had I for these graceless, thieving rascals! Perhaps, had I not been Governor, I, also, might have been a forest-runner. Who knows?

Dick, my beautiful wife is very faithful and kind to me. She intrigues tirelessly in my behalf to gain for me again my Government of New France. She is devoted to my interest, ambitious for my advancement. She is kind to me, Dick, in every way—except—in love.

Damnation and a thousand she-devils, and may every Sulpitian fry in hell's hottest coals if I am able to stir my wife to any tenderness for me.

As for the ladies at Court, I tire of them. Those slender panthers of the forest, with their wild, lithe ways, made me forget for a while that I am, at heart, the loneliest man in the world. These painted, perfumed, powdered odalisques of Versailles have never done that much. Life is dull here;

one always is taking off one's hat or taking off somebody's clothes.

Also I hunt with the King and return to dress and go and wait upon Madame de Maintenon and grimace and duck and pivot like a peacock.

I am magnificently clothed, though ruined. For which blessing I thank God.

I have annoying news for you. His Majesty hath graciously busied himself with the marriage of the Countess de Palladine—do you remember our little Jeanne Hérouard?—that child, now twenty-two years old.

And, by the blister on the devil's rump where St. Michael spanked him!—who do you suppose she is married to? Grignon, cadet, whom we stretched on the sod that last day at Isle Savary. Yes, Grignon; who now has taken his wife's name and calls himself Count Palladine.

I didn't wish it; but my wife begged me not to offend the King; and so I strangled my fury and thought of Quebec. Grignon-Palladine! My God!

As for Jeanne, poor wretch, I know not whether she ever can come to love him; only this I know—that, in the presence of my wife and myself—she swore at him, saying that the King might make her marry him but the devil himself could not make her share his bed. And that strange attitude toward husbands seems to run in my wife's family, it seems.

Dick, I am heart-sick for the mighty roar of savage winds and waters and black, resounding forests which stretch away to the world's ends!

I beg you to write to me concerning that raw and wind-swept Western World, the longing for which ever gnaws my breast.

God forbid that I should grow old and weary and toothless in this accursed place of regulated hours, where all is timed to the minute, and the King himself yawns only on the scheduled second, and scratches his ear every day at the sacred moment appointed for such exercises.

I sicken of gilded walls and mirrors and lights—luxuries

and lights—they mean the same in Latin. But there is no such word in the Huron tongue, or in the Ottawa, nor in the language of Ojibway, Delaware, or Fox.

Dick, I am sick at heart where I sit writing to you here in my wife's apartments which that jackass, the Duc de Lude, has given her for life—

An interruption! The Countess Palladine comes to lean over me and fondle my grey hair and grey moustache and pet me.

"To whom do you write, Monsieur?" says she. "To the Chevalier d'Auros." After a moment she laughs—not pleasantly: "Say to Monsieur Stanhope," says she, "he ought not to be too sure that because I am married I shall be incapable of punishing him some day. And that very soon." "What the devil do you mean by that?" said I. "I mean," said she, "that his Majesty hath appointed Count Grignon-Palladine to Quebec. And I shall go with him!"

"By the curly pig's tail of the devil's dam!" I cried, "what is this you tell me, Jeanne?"

"Dame!" says she coolly, "Madame de Maintenon desires private information concerning heretics in Canada, and the King, who denies her nothing, sends my husband, a new Governor, and a new Bishop, to Quebec."

My God, it is true, Dick! Denonville is to go. And Saint-Vallier. And, later, Palladine goes—who, like the Intendant, is no more than a spy upon the Governor. Ha! What a contemptible pot o' soup!

Well, there you are! I am not named as Governor. No. They send that sanctimonious cavalryman of the Dragonnades who prays and repeats the psalms of David while his dragoons chase old women and little children!

Oh, my friend of better days, I am sick in my soul. But, damnation, I am undaunted!

I salute you! I love you! May God protect you. And the prettiest of his girl-angels comfort you.

FRONTENAC.

But Frontenac was wrong. For there came to Quebec, presently, a new Governor, one La Barre, to replace Count Frontenac. He proved to be a boaster and a coward. He drove out La Forêt and La Salle; he grovelled before the Iroquois and licked their dirty moccasins. And they despised him.

The old witch of Versailles, also, conceived a sudden contempt for him; and recalled him and sent us another Governor to Quebec—a bigoted, superstitious, pious, and moral colonel of dragoons—the same Red Dragoons which she used in her terrible Dragonnades against the Huguenots!

This was the man named by Frontenac—Denonville—and he had been instructed to purge Canada of every heretic within its borders.

In the same ship came also the new Bishop—as the Count had predicted—Saint-Vallier. I was at my manor house of Auros at the time the ship arrived; and, being colonel of my côte regiment of militia, I was obliged to put on my uniform and present myself at the Château during all those tiresome ceremonies which I so detest.

It was there that the Marquis of Denonville remarked to me in his gloomy manner that his orders from the King were to drive out of Canada every heretic within its borders. And he stared at me oddly when he said it.

I went home that night deeply concerned for the welfare of this land which now had become my own and beloved country, and for which I was passionately ready to pour out every drop of blood in my veins.

I wrote a long and excited letter to Count Frontenac begging him to find some means of returning here to save New France.

I told him that La Barre had crippled Canada; that Denonville would utterly lose it to the Boston witch-burners and the pirates of New York.

I warned him that the only way to save Canada was for him to return as Governor, seize the power and defy the world.

I told him that the Coureurs-de-Bois would stand by him; that, in very terror of the New England Puritans and the ferocious Iroquois, the middle classes and the peasantry would support him; that he alone could win to his aid the Hurons and Algonquins who, in fear of the Iroquois, must either fight with him or sink under Seneca hatchets into absolute annihilation. Everything which he had been on the point of accomplishing, I explained, had now been thoroughly undone by that poltroon, La Barre, and finally would be ruined by Denonville.

As for Count Grignon-Palladine, I told him he had not arrived, with Denonville, to spy on honest men and meddle with their private lives and personal beliefs.

It is a pity [said I], that so ignoble an errand should bring to Canada the husband of any woman connected with your race. Poor little Jeanne Hérouard! What a heart of gold, and what a temper is hers!

As for what she said about tormenting me, that, of course, was an old and time-honoured jest between us.

I can not realize she has grown to womanhood. I can not visualize our little Jeanne as a wife. If she does arrive here, not only for your sake but for hers I shall place my poor services completely at her disposal and shall endeavour in every way to please her and her husband.

Monsieur, I beg of you to hasten and return to us. I beg of you to move heaven and earth to aid you.

There is war in the air! It will come. I know it. And if you are not here, God help Canada!

Chapter XXIII

ALL went wrong! All went wrong with the Marquis of Denonville, with Canada, with me, with my dream of making out of this magnificent wilderness a vast, free empire dedicated to liberty of spirit, mind, and body.

But these people were cattle. They wanted no more liberty than to feed and sleep.

All went wrong in New France as soon as Frontenac sailed away. The lower town burned to the ground—except Chesnayé's house—and was rebuilt so stupidly that smoking a pipe in the streets was forbidden on account of danger from fire.

So much for these sheep when left to their own devices. Liberty! Yes, the kind Frontenac administered with a word like the crack of a whiplash.

It is so with all people everywhere. There never was, never will be, a democracy that is not a tyranny. And only an autocrat can mitigate its ills. So much for my dream!

As for Denonville—God help him—bigoted, brainless, brave, bewildered—the old witch of St. Cyr bade him humble the Iroquois.

Derided by Dongan, the English Governor in New York, jeered at by the Iroquois Confederacy, his slow brain of a gendarme finally came to a conclusion; and he ordered the drums to beat.

All the bells in all the churches of Quebec rang; the Bishop exhorted the militia to march on the enemies of heaven.

Well, among others, I assembled my battalion at Auros.

The river was covered with flat-boats full of soldiers, and canoes full of our Indian converts, all smeared with scarlet and as full of plumes as a feather-bed.

The campaign began with a crime, for those two sanctimonious gentlemen, the Governor and his Intendant, seized, through treachery, scores and scores of friendly, peaceable Iroquois at Fort Frontenac, and shipped them off to France for galley slaves!

We had two thousand soldiers at Fort Frontenac. Nick o' the Woods fetched us half a thousand screeching Algonquin wildcats; Ottawas, Hurons, Foxes, joined us at Irondequoit; we marched, each seignior at the head of his côte company—four battalions. The Governor of Montreal commanded the advance guard.

Greysolon led the Coureurs-de-Bois. This was the wild vanguard.

On the right flank glided the Western pagans, horrible in paint and wearing the fur, horns, and tails of wild beasts.

On the left trotted our wolf-like Mission Indians, ghastly in their naked paint, led by Nick o' the Woods in his scarlet hood of the Prince of Hell.

Behind marched Denonville with our four battalions of regulars and four more of militia—the regulars in light body-armour and near dying of the heat.

Suddenly, in mid-forest, like a screaming hurricane, the Iroquois struck us!

Our militia ran. God! I can see Denonville now, sword in hand, yelling at them, beating them into line again. Greysolon, Nick o' the Woods, La Valterie, Berthier, and I rode our horses against them, trampling them back against the yelling Senecas until they were obliged to face them and fight for their lives.

It was like the pit of hell itself there in the stifling forest,

all ablaze with roaring musketry, the thunderous shouting of soldiery, the deafening yelling of frantic savages.

I had never dreamed of such warfare. All was a smoky, bloody blur swarming with the crazed shapes of demons leaping through flames.

I know not how we came through a world of marsh grass and alders and saw a cleared hill with the Seneca Babylon atop, where a great mask with metal teeth and eyes leered down upon us.

Then Moloch and all that goblin city burst into flame, through which, shrieking, rushed hundreds of huge, filthy, hairy hogs. All passed like a monstrous, loathsome dream. When I think of it I feel like vomiting.

Alas, our campagin came to nothing.

We had destroyed a wasp-nest but not the wasps. Somewhere, in viewless forests, Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneidas, Mohawks were swarming and buzzing in gathering fury.

Now was the time to sweep that foul nest clean and stamp on every wasp from Niagara to the Mohawk, from Albany to New York.

I said to Nicolas Perrot, "My God, Nick, this is not war; this is only one battle. Frontenac would begin now, where Denonville ends all!"

But that is all Denonville ever was—a brave gendarme. So he ordered the drums to beat and he marched for home.

I sat my horse on the burned hill. A Huron chief, young, handsome, beautifully made as a naked god of brass, stood by my stirrup. He was Kondiaronk, The Rat.

He looked at my soldiers who stood in rank, leaning heavily on their muskets; he looked at the drummers, halted, ready, with drumsticks lifted to beat a march; he turned slowly and looked at me.

"Onontio," he said bitterly, "ho no we he to."

"Yes," said I bitterly, "the Governor has gone."

"Why?" demanded The Rat scornfully.

"Sa de gwa se," said I, "—he is bruised. With both ears hanging he looks around for his kennel—te ha tah ontenyonk, te kaha hoonk!"

"It is well," said The Rat. "He is the Onontio who makes everybody angry. It is well. Sagona qua deh! But let him remember that I am The Rat. Never twice do I venture into the same trap.

"Onontio is a singing mouse who sings to himself a silly song of peace. I am The Rat. I gnaw my way to safety. And when again I hear the peace-song of the singing mouse, then I shall put on red paint and take my drum and sing to my Hurons, hawa sa-say!"

I sat my horse looking at this wise warrior in troubled silence. Presently Nick o' the Woods in his Wyandotte dress and blood-red cockscomb hood, came galloping out to the wood's edge below. He lifted his war-hatchet high above his head.

I turned in my saddle and raised my musket. A roll of drums crashed out. We marched for home—God help us!

Chapter XXIV

I HEARD the distant noise of bells from the upper town. But they were ever ringing their church bells in every steeple. Also I heard a cannon shot and then another; and sat up in my blanket blinking. Josephine came to the kitchen door and looked out across the river.

Said I, "Why are the bells and cannon sounding?"

"A ship from France, Monsieur the Chevalier, is anchoring off the six gun battery."

I rolled over and went to sleep again.

Somebody spoke to me, after an interval, awaking me once more. I looked up from the settle where I lay a-sunning and still half asleep in my neglected garden at Auros.

My housekeeper, Josephine Ledoux, curtseyed and informed me that the Intendant, Monsieur de Champigny, had arrived at my house and was seated there awaiting me.

I got up from the bench, rubbing my eyes, somewhat ashamed of the figure I cut, being in my greasy buckskins, unwashed, and my tangled hair uncombed.

Yawning, I brushed out the fringes on my forest dress, laced up my shirt of dingy deerskin, re-tied the gaudy beaded belt of white and scarlet and pulled on both moccasins.

What the devil this pious Intendant—who was even more pious than our Marquis Governor—wanted of me I could not imagine.

However, I went into the house by the kitchen door and, passing through my bed-chamber and cabinet, came into the long, unplastered room; and saw him there seated in his

ruffles, silks, and plumes, and a-playing with Sainte Barbara's medal on his breast. The room stank with the orange scent he wore and the powder and pomatum.

More ashamed than ever of my soiled condition, I saluted Monsieur de Champigny and bade Josephine fetch us a morning draught of St. Charles beer.

We made our compliments; I told him I was sorry not to receive him in dress and condition more suitable: "I can no longer sleep well in my bed, and seem to fret and toss when bedded within walls," said I; "so lately I lay me on a settle in my garden, and sleep well enough there."

He was polite, but it was evident he could not understand such savagery. I felt uncomfortably dirty in his carefully cared for presence, and it afforded me a momentary glimpse of the careless and vagabond condition to which by degrees I now had arrived.

He said he was come to inquire concerning the condition of my tenants in case the côte should be mustered.

I rose, took the muster-rolls from a cabinet, and spread them before him in silence.

While watching him thumb the pages, somehow it occurred to me that this was really not his errand. I don't know why I thought so.

After a while, still studying the rolls: "Monsieur," said he, "I hope there are no heretics among your tenants. Monsieur the Marquis has very formal orders. I—" he looked up at me—"had meant to mention this to you after mass this morning—"

"I did not go to mass," said I; "I ate some strawberries and went to sleep on the settle."

He seemed pained. After a silence he spoke of Father Dubois, our parish priest, and said that the Bishop desired to know whether I found him satisfactory.

"Perfectly, Monsieur. He never wearies. He is kind and

brave and starves cheerfully on the dirty stipend allowed him."

"Monsieur," began Champigny in a shocked voice, "it is his Majesty who fixes the stipend—"

"Colbert, you mean, who asks why, if a Paris priest lives on two hundred francs a year, a Canadian priest cannot live on five. And there's Colbert for you."

"Has Father Dubois complained to you?" asked the Intendant coldly.

"No; nor even to God—as far as I know. . . . Well, yes, he has remonstrated very gently with me—but merely because I do not go very often to confession. That is the only complaint I ever heard from him."

Champigny said in a pious, nasal voice that, in these days, everybody should be at pains to avoid any suspicion of heresy.

I cared not for his piety nor his opinion, nor for Denonville's, either. I was, however, too polite to say so; but he may have interpreted my yawn, discreetly stifled.

"What ship has come in, Monsieur?" I inquired, indifferently.

He informed me that the great ship *Saint Cyr* had anchored and was landing three battalions of regulars and a Royal Special Commissioner—Count Grignon-Palladine.

I began to laugh, thinking what countenance he would make me who once had seen him laid by the heels among the buttercups of Isle Savary.

Then, still amused, I remembered Jeanne Hérouard, who had become wife to this gentleman. She could not yet have become matronly and stout, thought I, for she still must be very young. I was trying to remember how old she was, still smiling to myself over the memories she evoked—her tempers, her jealousies and boisterous affection, and that parting correction I had administered, and how she had hurled her books at my head—

I caught Champigny's eye, came to my senses, and asked his pardon.

"Is Madame the Countess de Palladine with Monsieur?" I enquired.

He said that she, also, had arrived; that they had a suite in the Château where—and he gave me a look out of his cold eyes—no doubt I would discover them when I waited upon them to pay my respects.

I don't know what devil of perversity put it into my head to say it, but I said: "This Special Commissioner of his Majesty seems to resemble that awesome official in New England who is called The Witch-finder General."

"Sir!" exclaimed the Intendant turning a violent red.

"Why, yes," said I, "for Count Grignon-Palladine comes to smell out heretics who, I suppose, like witches, smell delicately of hell."

"Monsieur," said the Intendant, "I cannot agree with you that such matters are a subject for jesting."

"Monsieur," said I, "I had not meant to offend you. Only it seems to me that we are very, very few in Canada and can scarcely afford to persecute or exile some stout fellow who might not feel inclined to worship God as we do."

The dull anger of the zealot sounded in his voice as he said that it were better to perish than to tolerate a single heretic in New France.

He was under my roof and I had nothing further to say to him on the subject; so spoke of other matters concerning the increasing insolence of the Iroquois; their determination to exterminate the Illinois Indians who, though a degenerate nation, were our allies; and the alarming threat that this implied toward our Hurons and Ottawas.

"I cannot see," said I, "how Monsieur the Marquis is to avoid war with these Iroquois wolves which the English are ever letting loose upon our Illinois and Huron allies. God knows, Sir, that our peasants do not want to fight; but if we

do not, then every Indian ally of ours must perish, and we shall have the Iroquois and the English at our gates before snow flies."

He said, gloomily, that he did not agree with me; that the diplomacy of Monsieur Denonville had not yet failed.

"We should contrive to turn the Dakotah loose on them—the Isanti, I mean," said I, "who themselves are wolves."

Champigny shook his head.

We walked to the door together and he stood looking out over the river shining in the morning sun.

Faintly to our ears came the far tumult of church bells from the rock; and, beyond the distant roofs and chimneys of the lower town, rebuilt since the fire, I could see the masts and flags of the great ship which had just arrived.

Champigny spoke in an irritated voice of Dongan, the English Governor at New York—the same impudent jester who had sent to Denonville a barrel of rotten oranges.

"There is nothing to be done with such a man," he remarked, "who understands very little of politeness and is as treacherous as his own Indians."

"He'll understand the sword," I said. "So will his damned Indians if we go down and kick out their fire at Onondaga. . . . Either that or they come up here and kick us all into the river. . . . I do not see why the Marquis waits any longer."

After a moment Champigny looked at me, then looked away.

He said in a troubled voice: "It is more important that the Marquis and Count Palladine sift out the heretics. . . . The other day a peasant had the impudence to say that the time had come when men ought to think for themselves; and that the English were quite right to cut off King Charles' head. . . . Something is wrong in Canada. Imagine the impertinence of the rich heretic sea-captains of La Rochelle, who sail over here to trade with us. And, as if that were

not enough, they are now asking permission to spend the winter ashore and be permitted to become citizens! Did you ever hear of such impudence? And look at that slut who handed to the Governor those scurrilous verses about himself! There is in this land a growing contempt for law and religion. It is time to check such disorders."

"It seems to me," said I, "that Monsieur Grignon-Palladine might find a more opportune time than this for his peculiar activities."

"I am sorry," said he, "that neither the Marquis, the Bishop, nor I agree with you."

He put on his plumed hat, then took it off to me and made his compliments politely enough.

Two of his guards—who were no more than constables, held his stirrup.

I stood and watched this santified policeman ride away with his two constables. There was danger in him. So was there in this new Bishop. And in Denonville—danger to a man like myself who, though practicing the Faith, was quite likely to wake up some morning and find himself half Huguenot.

In fact, I once had said as much, lightly and in a jesting way, while dining at Cadaraqui with my solemn young friend, La Salle, and other officers; and they merely laughed. But later a Recollet Father—one of Count Frontenac's protégés—had whispered to me that it was dangerous to make such jests in Canada, and that he had heard La Barre mention it with anger in the Palace of the Intendant. . . . Where, doubtless, everybody has his dossier,—I among the rest.

The thought irritated me. It seemed sordid and pitiful that I, who had come to a New World, eager and boastful and prepared to assist at the rebirth of a nation, to be dedicated to freedom of conscience, had found no opportunity. No. For here conditions were already more tyrannical than in France itself.

Nor, in the New World, did I discover any region free of bigotry; but everywhere Protestant zealots persecuted Quakers, and the old Puritan troopers of Cromwell were burning women in Massachusetts Bay and no Huguenot was to be tolerated in Canada.

I was still young enough to become angry at injustice; the old Witch of St. Cyr disgusted me; so did the King of England; and the Boston bigots; and the stupid zealots in New France.

Civilization? Was it this, then? A perpetual snouting out of other people's business? A long, pointed, sniffing nose thrust into all privacy? A dully vindictive eye peering through every keyhole? A listening ear flattened against every wall? A commissioner like Count Grignon-Palladine tip-toeing about Quebec? A fanatical Bishop, a sanctimonious Governor, a pious Intendant—all, on the eve of a terrible national catastrophe, intent only upon detecting and persecuting some poor devil whose only crime was to adore God in his own manner.

And, though the idea of all this sickened me, I knew very well that there was real danger; and I had no mind to sit in the Intendency Prison or sail back to France with sixteen pounds of iron links ornamenting my shins.

Chapter XXV

NOTHING is easier than to revert to savagery. Plowed land, uncultivated, very quickly sprouts new forests. Fruits, grains, garden flowers, allowed to straggle, become like the wild stock from which they sprang. Fat swine become shaggy wild boar again; dogs grow into wolves, cats into lynxes;—even the black Spanish barnyard cock turns mongrel and many coloured and runs or flies through the woods like any wild fowl.

So, man. For, in a savage land, if he become lonely, discouraged, without purpose, the rags of civilization slip from him like rotting garments; and man's first shelter, the wilderness, draws him home again, godless, naked—a fierce and wary thing that sleeps and feeds and slinks and slays *until* the fate that dooms all wild things overtakes him, also.

This land was lost. Gradually this belief was becoming a certainty within my mind.

Frontenac had failed. I had failed. These people were cattle. There was to be no liberty here. The great grey Rock ruled them. What did they care for freedom as long as they had brandy and could fiddle?

Freedom to labour? They did not wish to work. Freedom of conscience? They did not want it.

Why plow? Beaver and brandy, and a little enterprise, paid better.

As for women, what more did they need than ribbons and lace and leisure to dance and make a little love?

And the swarming children of the *côte noblesse*—what had they to do with the harrow and the plow? Ragged, wild, they galloped and raced among the stump-fields with

Indian children, or slunk off into the woods with their little red comrades to shift for themselves—feed, fight, play like wild creatures.

Or, older, with some lithe, depraved Indian girl—and with trap, and rusty gun too big for them, they took to game trails and lost water-courses, in defiance of Royal Edict and Provincial Law. Adolescence needs a mate. They found plenty of wild ones.

The forests were swarming with such—from the Saguenay to the upper lakes—all these youngsters growing up wild, wearing Indian dress, governed by Indian customs, vicious, clever, jeering at all law and all restraint.

The forest was their world. Within its immemorial twilight they trapped, fished, traded, wandered, fought, mated, loafed.

When they came into Quebec, Three Rivers, Montreal, it was only to trade and carouse.

As for me, little by little I was becoming like these. No better in any way, only that I had not severed all bonds with civilization.

I neglected my Seigniory of Auros, but still returned to it at intervals. I was still colonel of my tenantry. My forest-running was not entirely at hazard because often my missions were military and it was under orders from the Château that I roamed from Beaupré to La Chine; from Fort Frontenac to the Upper Ottawa.

I knew the imprint of an Iroquois moccasin when I saw one.

I knew a Souriquois scalp from an Iroquois. I did not reply “naji” to a Delaware, or “taän” to an Iroquois.

To an Ottawa I was blunt and watchful; to a Huron kind and firm; to an Illinois contemptuous; to an Iroquois as civil or as arrogant as he merited. As for the Lenape, my attitude was what they invited; for the Loup is always a Loup, and nobody ever yet knew what a wolf is meditating.

But there was one, a Loup, a Siwanois woman of the Mohican Nation, who seemed more like a young French girl—

Well, I would not take her with me to the upper lakes. . . . I had to tell her I would shoot her if she followed me—

No; I was not yet become as savage as that.

Walking along the côte between my neglected fields, I heard the bell of our parish church ringing and saw Father Dubois going into his little whitewashed house. The bell rang for one minute exactly, which was all the law allowed. It was noon and the dinner hour; and the little ragged children of my tenants, whom he had been teaching, were now let loose to race and frisk and gallop over the meadows, or sit by the roadside and gossip and munch their tartines and cheese.

A tall, swarthy fellow in gaudy Indian dress, and wearing a scarlet hood, came sauntering along the road. He was Nicolas Perrot, well known to be a forest-runner, though nobody dared arrest him. But they had made up a song about him in Quebec, with which to frighten children; and all the children called him Nick o' the Woods, and were always fluttering around him, half bold, half afraid, yet fascinated and enchanted by his terrible reputation and his scarlet hood.

Now, as he strolled along, they swarmed about him challenging him to chase him, which, at intervals, he pretended to do, so that they shrieked and scattered, only to close in again and follow at his heels.

And I heard their shrill young voices singing the song that had been made about him, and with which their mothers hoped to frighten them into good behaviour:

"Who comes at dawn with stealthy tread?

'Tis Nick o' the Wood!

'Tis Nick o' the Wood!

*To catch the lazy child abed,
'Tis Nick o' the Wood!
'Tis Nick o' the Wood!
Then wake and rise and say your prayer,
And wash your face and comb your hair!
I will Mamam! I will be good,
For I'm afraid o' Nick' o' the Wood!*

*"Who comes at night in hood of red?—
'Tis Nick o' the Wood!
'Tis Nick o' the Wood!
To chase the wilful child to bed?
'Tis Nick o' the Wood!
'Tis Nick o' the Wood!
With bead and cross I'll say my prayer,
In naked shift and braided hair,
And pray the Saints to make me good,
For I'm afraid o' Nick o' the Wood!"*

And, "Nick o' the Wood! Nick o' the Wood!" they screamed, hovering around him like a flock of birds, "chase us and tickle us, Nick o' the Wood!"

It was plain that he did not scare them very badly, for one little bare-legged maid ventured to take him by the hand as he strode along, and another ran and jumped on his back, begging to be taken up and carried on his shoulder.

When I overtook him he was almost covered with children, and, to please them, was making a kind of growling noise which drew from them delighted screams.

He bade me good-day with the hardy grin of equality and comradeship—God knows we had been through enough together in the forest to make us equals!—and when he had shaken half a dozen children from his back and shoulders he told me he had come to town to see the new ship and get drunk at The Swan Tavern. Also, he said that he carried a

letter to the Marquis of Denonville from the upper Ottawa.

"Very well," said I, "deliver your letter at the Château and come to the Swan, where I will endeavour to get as drunk as anybody, God willing."

Chapter XXVI

I DID not care whether my clothing was greasy or not, or that I wore a fringed hunting shirt and raccoon cap instead of doublet and laced beaver.

A number of the shabby, rascally young sprigs of nobility had come out of the forest for a satisfying debauch in the city; and they were making a great noise at The Wild Swan Tavern in the lower town when I arrived there.

A shout went up as soon as they clapped eyes on me; so I commanded a dozen more bottles of Burgundy and a great bowl of brandy-punch.

They cheered loudly at that and made me mount a table and sing to them an English song. Which I did; and two fiddlers fiddled it.

Well, then some among them danced—there were a number of their slim young Indian girls with them and some girls of our own race—and a most devilish racket, what with fiddles, singing, shouting, disputes—and the hopping and stamping about in imitation of an Ottawa war-dance.

I wished to caress a Huron girl but one of Le Moyne's sons jerked her away; and, when I nearly got hold of the fellow to throw him through the window, everybody took a hand and pulled us apart.

I had no mistress—none, that is, in particular; and thus men watched me and women sometimes smiled upon me.

It is strange that the ashes of my one passion still leached bitterly within me. There was no love in the world for me; no sweetness in its disreputable parody—only recklessness, effrontery, or a kind of savage indifference that accepted what happened, without effort, without interest.

The young Chevalier of Ariscourte Seigniory got into a fight with Nicolas Perrot and two Huron girls and one of the Le Moyne brothers, but the worst that came of it was a bloody nose.

When again all were reconciled and more bottles commanded from The Wild Swan cellar, I gave a toast—"War! May it come before we all are murdered in our beds!"

We all drank it, and everybody began to yell and stamp about and flourish knives and belt-hatchets.

Then one of those lithe young forest cats of the Dakotah—an Isanti girl—sprang from her lover's knee to a table and began to sing "The Iron Birds."

It was like oil on flames; a mighty roar arose; then sudden silence, pierced by the girl's strange, wailing voice:

*"Iron Birds fill the sky
When clouds are red;
In the grass I lie
Dying amid the dead;
—Iron Birds flying
Through the Red Sky
Over the dying,
Where I, too, die;—
Iron Birds scream and soar—
War-birds born of Wars.
Close my lodge-door;
Nail it with stars.
War chief nor Sagamore
May break those bars!
Koui! I pass before!*

*"Strange trail and unknown way!—
Iron Birds flying,
Iron Birds crying—
Nai! Roy-a-neh!*

*Red dies the day
Where I lie dying!
Nai! Roy-a-neh!"*

This ever popular lament of the Western Nations evoked a terrific response; we shouted and stamped and screamed, and the rafters rang with the Wyandotte scalp yelp!—a horrid triple-treble yell quavering away into a devilish and endless falsetto,—the most cruel and hellish sound that human throats ever have uttered.

I had had enough wine—perhaps too much. Too much of the wild stench from wild, half-naked bodies. Young Dunois' tawny mistress—an Athabasca girl—was mauling me like an April tree-cat when I made my way to the door for a breath of air. And there, along the street, I saw a lady walking beside a gentleman in white and scarlet; and both accompanied by a mincing company of young officers in white uniforms faced with green.

Dirty, half drunk, dishevelled—the Athabasca girl still a-mauling me—I stood swaying there in the doorway of The Wild Swan, looking out of swollen, sun-dazzled eyes at the passing company.

Then, suddenly, I knew the gentleman in white and scarlet satin. Why, certainly! He was Grignon. . . . Grignon-Palladine—or whatever the fellow called himself.

As he passed, he glanced contemptuously at me. But he did not recognize in the dirty fellow in deerskins the man he had once met at Isle Savary.

The woman turned her dainty head toward me; moved on past The Wild Swan, slowly, gracefully, still looking straight across the street at me. And continued on along the street, her head, now, lowered a little, her gloved hand resting on her husband's arm as though she had grown a little weary of their tour amid the purlieus of the lower town.

She was Jeanne Hérouard. And she had looked upon me—God forgive me—and had known me at first glance.

Chapter XXVII

WHEN a wild animal is wounded its instinct is to creep into the woods.

My hurt was sudden and swift.

What vapour of wine had befogged me cleared from my brain like wind-swept mist.

I leaned against the doorway and stared at the sunlit river. Fresh breezes from the water stirred the fringes on my hunting-shirt and blew cool and sweet across my tangled hair.

That I had been wounded I knew. But of what nature was my wound, and how deep, I remained uncertain.

To get back to the forest where no woman's deep grey eyes could find me to hurt me—discover to me what once I had been and what I had become—ah! there was a stab, there!

Slowly I raised my soiled hands and looked at them—at my smoky shirt of deerskin fouled with wine; then my hands dropped dangling to my side.

Dunois appeared, very drunk, and pulled his mistress back into the tap-room.

The young *Sieur de Barras*, of the French Northern Company, came out unsteadily. He was going back to girdle trees at his new seigniori southwest of the *Richelieu*.

"You know that damned Iroquois, *Grangula*?" he hic-coughed.

I nodded.

"Well," said he, "look out for that talkative *Onondaga*. He fooled *La Barre*; he's fooling *Denonville*. He'll fool us all to death, yet. . . . Do you know the *Huron Rat*?"

"You mean *Kondiaronk*?"

"I do. Tell your dull Marquis to beware of him, too. Don't let Denonville think he can deceive The Rat. He could fool God more easily."

"How do you mean? How deceive The Rat?"

"By making peace with Grangula and the Iroquois. The Rat won't let him. You tell Denonville. I know. I've got a Huron girl at Sorel. She tells me what she hears. All the forest talks of it."

He slung his bandolier and wallet, picked up his gun, took off his coonskin cap to me. The French are never too drunk to forget their manners.

He went one way, toward the St. Charles, I the other. And came, after a while, to Auros—sobered, sombre, conscious of my degradation and of my wound which was stirring within me a kind of fevered restlessness—an unease which seemed oddly familiar.

I called Josephine and bade her fetch a copper of hot water, and lay out my fine linen, court clothes, sword and best boots, and see to it that spurs and buckles were clean and shining.

My hair, which had been trimmed à la Coureur-de-Bois, was so short that I was ashamed; but it curled naturally when freshly washed, and that helped a little—for I never have been able to endure a wig, which I consider to be a dirty fashion.

Well, then, when I was shaven, cleaned, and apparelled, I did not yet know why I had made myself proper and fine—only the odd instinct that it might help my restlessness and feverish unease.

There had grown within me a strange sadness of the mind, too, which seemed to stir memories of early years—of cavalry fighting in Spain; and of Lewknor's Lane, and Eleanor Gwyn.

But, more strange than anything, was the phantom of Nellie that kept growing and dissolving before my mind's

eyes—for she seemed more like Jeanne Hérouard at times, though God knows she does not resemble her.

There came the noise of a ridden horse—one of Denonville's guards at my gate, busy with his emblazoned satchel; then, pied-à-terre to salute me, hat in one hand, a letter in the other, sealed, perfumed—request of Monsieur the Marquis that I do him the honour of my attendance at the Château. A conference of officers later. I had not been to the Château since my return from the North.

It was a reproof; enough dry politeness in it for me to heed it. After all, perhaps that was what I had so carefully dressed for. For who, here in my garden, was to see my silver laced doublet with its blue velvet separate sleeves, and my vest of silver tissue? Or the jewel-set jabot—a cataract of blond lace given me by Prince Rupert?

“Are there many at the Château?” I asked the trooper.

He said that the Château and upper town were en fête, what with the arrival of the ship, and so many troops with their noble officers, and His Majesty's special Commissioner, Monsieur le Comte Grignon-Palladine, with a brilliant suite in attendance.

I went to the Château St. Louis leisurely, noticing the holiday throngs swarming along the steep wood-paved ascent and crowding all the streets and squares of the upper city where banners hung from every church and the bells were ever pealing.

Usually one encounters few folk excepting soldiers and priests and nuns in that part of Quebec. Now every street and square was gay with officers' uniforms, with silks and jewels of ladies, with brilliant dresses of habitants en fête.

The fortress flew the great white banner sewn thick with golden lilies; mounted troopers in gala uniform sat their horses at every gate and doorway of the Château, the fort, and the city walls.

There were Indians, too—a few fierce Fox chiefs wearing horns and tail, their features painted a blazing scarlet; Miami Sachems, their faces masked with green paint covered with white spots; and many gaudy Mission Indians, Christian converts from Saut St. Louis, Delawares from Sillery Mission, Hurons of Lorette—all these wild folk, arranged in barbaric splendour, invaded the sombre, silver-grey city of churches, seminaries, and convents.

As I passed into the rickety old Château, I exchanged salutes and compliments with very many acquaintances—with perfumed gentlemen and ladies crowding corridors, halls, passing up and down staircases. The place resounded with chatter and laughter, clink of sword and spur and click of high, slender heels on marble pavement and polished parquet. Warm, scented waves of air stirred up by fans set lace and plume and curl a-nodding; birds in gilded cages were noisy everywhere; and I heard fiddles and bassoons from where were supping and dancing and cards for who desired to play.

Denonville I saw with the gentlemen and ladies of his entourage; and went to make my compliments to him and to Champigny. The Marquis seemed polite but reserved; the Intendant civil but sombre, yet both had been laughing before I approached.

Then, suddenly, close to me, I saw Grignon-Palladine staring at me. The Marquis made us known to each other—who knew each other only too damned well!—but nothing in the world could surpass the compliments and civilities which we exchanged. Oh, lord! the falseness of this man's features which had no mirth in them when he grimaced and saluted me. He had a small, high voice that shrilled like the vibrating bell on an old Dutch clock! His amber-powdered wig was reddish like the King's, and so were his little brown-red eyes which seemed polished but not translucent.

It was for him to have spoken of our encounter at Isle Savary if he had meant to make a peace sans rancune between us. He never mentioned it, nor admitted by any hint that he and I ever before had met.

What the devil! one ought not to bear malice for an honest thrust or two! But it was not for me to recall what he seemed to have forgotten. However, I did make inquiries concerning his wife.

"Ah, yes," said he, "I believe you had some slight acquaintance with Madame de Palladine in France. I shall have the honour of recalling you to her memory."

I was inclined to laugh; but, looking up, saw in his smirking visage no warmth, only a leering fixity. And I wondered if he were like this to all or only very particularly to me.

Yet a little while this man and I were held in conversation; then others intervened—I do not recollect who—but Le Moyne was there, and some of his enterprising youngsters; and the talk, which was of war, presently drew in others.

While we were conversing, I continued to look about me to see if I might spy out Jeanne Hérouard among all these animated and pretty women. As I did not discover her I asked her husband if she were present. Something immediately altered in his features—I know not what—but it was like the shifting mechanics on the dial of a Dutch clock.

He said in his little shrill voice that the Countess was indisposed and kept her chamber.

"We took a tour today," said he, "through the lower town, and the squalor of it—noise, heat, dirt, smells—seemed to upset the Countess."

I grew uncomfortably red and remained silent.

Denonville, passing with the Intendant, asked us to be good enough to attend him to his bureau. We followed

him and entered. There were gathered, now, the Governor General, the Intendant, Count Grignon-Palladine the Special Royal Commissioner, Le Moyne de Longueuil, Captain Subercase, the Abbé Belmont, the Chevalier de Baugy, aide-de-camp to Denonville, other officers, but who they were I do not now recollect.

There was no formality as at a council of war. Denonville took a letter from his aide and stepped back into the deep recess of a window where the light was good.

The letter, which had just arrived, was from the officer commanding at the upper Ottawa Fort. No doubt it was the one that Nick brought. The Governor read it aloud. It was a warning that The Rat and forty Hurons had taken the warpath against the Iroquois and were on their way to strike them.

When Denonville finished there was a tense silence. Nobody seemed inclined to offer any comment.

Asked, presently, for his opinion, Subercase said bluntly that he cared not whether it was war or peace with the Iroquois, but hoped it would now be either the one or the other, because, for his part, he was heartily tired of all these forest-murders, year after year, and desired to end them in one way or another.

Champigny, questioned, expressed a pious wish for peace. He was a godly jackass.

The Abbé Belmont agreed with him and added that the Bishop's well-known views were similar to his.

Le Moyne, interrogated, shook his grizzled head and shrugged. He left politics to others.

Grignon-Palladine, having just arrived, had no opinion.

Denonville said, gloomily, that he was for peace, and meant to maintain it. Then, fixing his troubled gaze on me, he said that I represented a certain and peculiar opinion which, perhaps, ought not to be ignored.

"Sir," said I, "do you mean I represent what would be

the opinion of our late Governor, Count Frontenac?"

Denonville reddened: "I mean," he returned coldly, "the opinions of yourself, of Nicolas Perrot, and the Coureurs-de-Bois, and of our licensed traders, hunters, trappers."

"Monsieur," I replied, "I do not feel free to express to you my opinion and the opinion of these others."

He said, haughtily, that he accorded me entire freedom to say what I chose concerning a crisis which already was upon us and must instantly be faced.

"Very well, Monsieur," said I, "there is only one opinion among us. You say you mean to maintain peace. There is no peace. You may *make* peace. You can not maintain what does not exist.

"Because, at this hour, as we stand here, there is no peace in Canada. There is only murder and terror everywhere except under the cannon of this fortress!—everywhere—at Fort Frontenac, Niagara, on the Ottawa, along the côtes of the Richelieu, yes, and up to the very ditches of the Montreal forts—terror, murder, devastation, ruin! The Iroquois make Canada their prey. West of Three Rivers our wretched settlers huddle behind stockades in every seignior and dare not go out to till their fields. Everywhere the Iroquois roam and prowl, stealthily as unseen panthers, ambushing convoys, butchering farmers; everywhere through our forests glide these horrible painted spectres.

"Beyond Three Rivers, who dares plow, harrow, sow, reap? Who dares set an eel pot, lift a fish net, fell a tree?

"With dusk the fields, pastures, meadows are full of these goblins. Nay, at noonday, even, they flit along the forest edge, vanish, appear, are gone. Then, of a sudden, some woman in her garden screams—and they are there!—and are gone amid shrieks and spattered blood.

"Monsieur, is this the peace you desire to maintain?"

Denonville's austere visage had turned crimson. When he had control of himself he said very quietly that he already

had tried war and that war had not solved the problem of the Iroquois.

"Sir," said I, "you are a brave man. In '87, when you marched against the Senecas, I saw you run, sword in hand, into that frightful ambushade. Le Moyne, too, saw you, in the alders and long rank grass, beat back the militia to their duty.

"Sir, as you have given me freedom to speak, I have the honour to represent to you that all that was merely *fighting*. But it was not *war*! You burned the Seneca town and all their corn. Our soldiers killed all the hogs. Twelve hundred thousand bushels of corn did we destroy,—at least you told us so.

"And then, Sir, you retreated to Irondequoit. You did not pursue. You did not go on and crush the other wasps—the Mohawks, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneidas. No, Monsieur; you knocked down the wasp's nest; but you did not tread upon it. You left them alive. And they are here again, to sting us all to death.

"My God, Sir, how can you maintain such a 'peace'? I beg you to consider what these devils out of hell have done since their Hiawatha made of them but a single swarm of fiends! Where is the great Erie nation? Exterminated. Where is the great nation of the Andastes? Annihilated. No people have withstood these human tigers.

"What have they done to our Hurons? Decimated them. And now these devils bid us stand aside while they murder our Illinois to the last woman and child.

"Sir, is this the condition of peace which you mean to maintain?

"Sir, I have ended."

There was a terrible silence. Presently Denonville said in a constrained voice that he had invited an Iroquois Embassy to Montreal to conclude a general peace.

"Monsieur," said I, "whatever colour and design may be

the belts these red ambassadors bring you, never doubt, Sir, that they are remembering what you did to them at Fort Frontenac. And that, in their hearts, all belts they offer you are *red!*"

Champigny turned on me angrily and opened his slitted mouth of a fish to speak; but no words came. After all, treachery is treachery, whether white or red men be deceived by it; and words can not mend such deeds.

But Denonville, always brave, met that thrust bravely. He said, very simply and seriously, that he had made an unhappy mistake in '87, by entrapping the friendly Iroquois at Fort Frontenac, but that he had not clearly understood the situation at the time. Which, I think, may have been the truth.

He said, further, that he had made a worse mistake in sending the Iroquois prisoners to France to be used as galley slaves; and that he had written to the King begging that they be released and returned.

After a few moments he added, quietly, that he had great hopes of peace from this promised Iroquois Embassy; that this Huron war, partly headed by The Rat, would ruin all unless stopped at the Lakes; and that a council of war on the morrow would determine how best to stop it and who ought to be sent.

Subercase, standing beside me, turned and looked at me: "You," he said under his breath. "Oh, my God, the irony of it!"

The Marquis Governor said something to Champigny and then walked slowly across the polished floor to where I stood leaning on a gilded chair.

"Monsieur," said he, "in the event of such a choice, would you be good enough to undertake such a mission?"

"Sir, I will go if sent. But I may not be able to stop The Rat."

"Why?"

"Because The Rat knows perfectly well that if you make peace with the Iroquois, the Iroquois will turn on the Hurons, Ottawas and Illinois and leave not one of them alive."

"Does The Rat suppose I will stand aside and see his people ruined?" demanded Denonville.

"What else can he think if you make peace with his enemies?"

"I shall include all our allies in a general peace," said the Governor calmly.

"The Iroquois ambassadors will make no such peace with you, Monsieur."

"Monsieur Stanhope," broke in Grignon-Palladine shrilly, "it is very plain that you will not undertake to stop The Rat on the Ottawa because you want war!"

"Sir," said I, turning on him in wrath and contempt, "I am a soldier and loyal. Do you understand?"

"Nevertheless," cried Grignon in his high voice, "I see no reason to send anybody who entertains such sentiments—"

"Sir," said I, "only one more word and I have the honour to tell you that I am affronted."

"Gentlemen!" exclaimed Denonville sharply.

Grignon hesitated, then began to say that he intended no affront.

"Then there is no affair," remarked the Governor drily. He went to the table, picked up his gold-laced hat, turned to us.

"Messieurs—shall we rejoin the ladies—if it pleases you?"

Chapter XXVIII

I SAUNTERED through the Château at hazard, now aware that I really was in quest of Jeanne Hérouard. There grew within me unease, like a faint pain, which seemed, partly, to be a need of finding her; and I was becoming conscious, now, of a vague, long-forgotten tenderness—something that had belonged to earliest youth—in the days when I suffered and was in love.

Since Count Frontenac's departure, I had been very seldom in the Château, finding in the dull Marquis neither sympathy nor comradeship. It saddened me, now, to wander here amid all this noise and brilliance.

There is a balcony which overlooks the great courtyard, and from which one may gaze down upon the roofs and chimneys of the lower town.

Here, when we first arrived, very often Count Frontenac and I used to walk and discuss the affairs of the unhappy colony from which, finally, he had been driven into penury and a melancholy exile.

To this balcony I now went, my mind sombre, troubled by formless premonitions, invaded by thoughts of Nell and of Jeanne Hérouard so that, somehow, these two seemed to become grotesquely entangled, and the vision and voice of the one became like the other—

Opening the long window I stepped out upon the balcony which ran all around the Château.

And saw Jeanne Hérouard coming slowly toward me.

Chapter XXIX

IMMEDIATELY I noticed again in this young woman the delightful resemblance to the child I had once known—her charming grey eyes, deep-edged by sooty lashes—the vivid mouth in particular, which had been so charmingly formed by nature that always the shadow of a hidden smile seemed to tremble there—

There was little colour in her face—in fact, I thought it had paled when I came upon her so abruptly. She smiled at me and found her voice before I did:

“Well, Monsieur,” said she gaily, “did I not warn you that, some day, I would come to New France to punish you? Very well; here I am!”

But I scarcely heard what she was saying; for I was wondering how, and with what heavenly art, God was sometimes pleased to fashion women; and that this one was his loveliest master work.

She curtseyed; I bowed and took her hand to raise her and salute her little jewelled fingers.

“Monsieur,” she said, “I hope you—and your lady—are somewhat recovered of your tavern frolic.”

I heard; but I was looking upon such utter beauty that I scarcely heeded what she said; and stood silent, mind and body captive and entranced.

She was gazing at me attentively, half smiling, curious. She bent her head, unclosed her fan, closed it, glanced up at me.

Then a strange light glimmered in her eyes, and I saw she was beginning to surmise what was happening to me—how sudden, swift, and dagger-deep the wound her beauty had

dealt me. And that her eyes stabbed deeper with every glance.

Nor could she help but see—so like a fool I stood there with my mortal wound plain enough for the whole world to grin at. For I was smitten through and through with love; and the blow left me as dumb as a Cap Rouge eel.

"Sir," said she, "what has happened to your tongue that you do not speak to me?"

"Madame," said I, "you are inhuman."

"I? Inhuman? What have I done then, Monsieur Stanhope?"

"Taken me prisoner—"

"Monsieur!"

"—To torture me as our Hurons torture captives!"

"What extravagance!—"

"It is the truth, Madame. When you were a child, and I displeased you, you warned me that you would come to Canada and punish me. But you did not tell me that the punishment was to be perpetual—"

"Perpetual, Monsieur?"

"Yes. Do you think my offense merits punishment eternal? I thought hell was reserved for that."

"What do you mean? How am I punishing you?" she asked smilingly.

"By condemning me, with your first glance, to love you instantly and passionately and forever. And without hope."

The bright colour flew to her cheeks and she gave me a confused look. But it must have been visible enough to her what had truly happened to me; for never had love so swiftly overwhelmed any man in the world—and it was plain enough in my voice and features had I not uttered a word to confirm it.

"What folly," said she, the breeze from her fan sweeping her flushed face; "—and I certainly do not understand what you are saying to me."

"I am saying to you that you have punished me as you threatened."

She regarded me intently, then fanned herself with dainty violence.

"You would have me flatter myself with the belief that I really am revenging myself. But I know I am not," she said disdainfully.

"Do you really doubt it, Madame?"

"I reserve my doubts—and hopes." . . . Suddenly she was smiling again. She leaned on the balcony rail and looked over and down:

"Lord," said she, "what a beautiful world is this new Western one of yours! Rivers like fairy seas; bays like celestial oceans; magic forests vast enough to cover old-world empires—" She glanced over her shoulder at me—"And how charming and gay is your Quebec!—like a toy Versailles built for children!—but Count Frontenac told me I would find it so. Ah—yes!—he sent to you his loyal affection—as did Madame la Comtesse also; and Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise. . . . All are well—only the poor Count frets for his lost Government of Canada. . . . The King is a strange man. . . . I wonder how he is going to account to God for—some things—"

She turned abruptly and looked downward upon the lower town.

I walked over beside her, but a slight shrug was all the notice she took.

After a while: "I ask leave to pay my court, Madame," I said desperately.

Very leisurely she turned her lovely head with its clustered curls over the ears and thick silky fringe framing the forehead. There was cruelty in her careless serenity.

"Do you find me very greatly changed, Monsieur—in twelve years?" she inquired. . . . "I am today twenty-three years of age."

"You were a charming child. . . . You have grown into the . . . most beautiful woman I ever have seen on earth!"

"Thank you. . . . And the happiest," she said coolly, "—but I do not believe you find me beautiful."

"You do not believe me?"

"No."

"Nor do I believe you, Madame—when you tell me you are happy."

"What do you mean? Do I not seem happy?" she demanded in apparent astonishment.

"Are you?"

"Certainly." She looked down at the roofs underneath.

But I was remembering what Frontenac had written about her wedding night. Perhaps all that had been altered, now. Yet, so far, she had not mentioned her husband.

So I mentioned him, politely, saying that I had had the honour to meet him in the long salon below.

"Oh," said she, "so he knows you are here, then—" still looking down at the chimneys. "But you have met before, I believe," she added carelessly.

I said: "Your husband did not seem to remember that occasion, so I did not permit myself to remind him of our very slight acquaintance."

She shrugged her lovely shoulders: "He remembers you perfectly," she remarked.

After a silence: "A charming man," she added. "I am sure you have found him so."

"I found him sufficiently civil."

"Only civil? Ah, wait till you know him better!"

"I doubt that I shall ever know him any better," said I.

"I'm afraid you are destined to, Monsieur Stanhope."

She turned from the balcony to straighten herself and look me directly in the face. All the menace in the world was in her unsmiling gaze.

"Monsieur," she said, "whether I am happy or otherwise

is no concern of yours. I mean it definitely. It is no concern of yours. If I still cherish any memory of childish unhappiness through you, I remember also, and always, that, except for you, my head would have hung among the oranges in Candia."

"Madame—"

"I beg you to listen. We Hérourards never forget any gratitude we owe; and we never forget any injury to our pride. We never forget anything! Consider these facts at your leisure, Monsieur. . . . And have the complaisance to conduct me to the salon below—"

She extended her small, jewelled hand; and so, her fingers resting very lightly on mine, I opened the glass doors and led her with every ceremony to the great stairway.

I said under my breath: "Madame, I think you will not care to receive me again."

"Could you really spare me any time from the pleasures of your tavern, Monsieur?"

I made no reply.

She laughed. "Also," she said, "they tell me that you are much loved by women; and that you love much—in this New World. Alas, Monsieur, your nature, which once was somewhat icy, appears to have become somewhat inflammable."

"I loved but once before I fell in love with you."

We halted on the stairs.

"My inflammable friend," said she, "pray do not waste those sacred flames where there is no tinder to catch fire."

"You have doomed me to love you," said I. "That is my punishment; and I must burn on."

"I hope it will not inconvenience you," said she.

We continued on down the stairway until we came to a landing where, lifting an embroidered banner, we could look down upon the perfumed throngs below.

Here she halted; my hand closed tightly on hers; she tried to withdraw her fingers.

"My rings hurt me," she said; "Monsieur, what is it you wish?"

"You, Jeanne!"

"I am like other women of my race—like the Countess de Frontenac—not to be approached. Besides," she added with a breathless smile, "I love my husband."

I did not believe her and I said so again.

She wrenched her hand free of mine, leaned back against the balustrade under the shadow of the banner and considered me out of brilliant, mocking eyes.

"What bishops have joined and kings have gilded over," said she, "let no man think to put asunder."

"Jeanne, I am most desperately in love—"

"You should have told me that when I kneeled to you upon my bed—God witnessed my tears!—for I loved you then, child that I was. Did you listen to me in that hour?"

"Jeanne—"

"No! You mocked me! And when in my grief and rage I lost my head—what did you do to me? Comfort me?"

"Jeanne!—"

"No! You beat me in my naked shift! You struck my body! You *did!* . . . And you went away and abandoned me for twelve years! You had no heart in those days. No compassion. No passion. You have none of these now—except passion."

She began to fan herself excitedly so that the soft hair stirred on her forehead and the little curls danced on her cheeks.

"Such a lover are *you!*" she said, fanning away furiously, her eyes brilliant and stormy. "And that's what you'd do again if I displeased you—beat me in my naked shift! And what else you might do, God knows!—take me by the hair, no doubt. Ah! Merci! It is well that women of my race

remain chaste. It is well that no lover can corrupt them. Yes, all that is very fortunate for me, Monsieur."

I began to smile to myself, I scarcely knew why.

"What are you laughing at?" said she.

"Because, with every word, you are lightening my punishment," said I.

"How am I?"

"Because you show me that you are not indifferent. You hate me. Yes, because I spanked you. I am glad I did!"

"What you did was infamous!"

"I know it. But it has not left you indifferent. I love you. And that does not leave you indifferent, either. No. It pleases you. Oh, certainly. Because it gives you an opportunity to torture me—"

"I do not desire to torture you—"

"You are doing it!"

She flushed.

"Make the most of it," said she. "I only wish you really did suffer a little for all the tears you once caused me. . . . You'll cause me more, unless you conduct me to my husband who must be annoyed at my absence—"

"Does he also beat you when annoyed—as I did, Madame?"

"What? *He* lift a finger to a Hérouard!"

I began to laugh at the astonished contempt in her voice and face.

"Monsieur," she said, "your wit is as brutal as your conduct. . . . An odd way of paying your court to a woman you say you are in love with. . . . Will you be polite enough to lend me your hand?"

We continued to descend the stairs.

Chapter XXX

I WAS sitting on my painted settle in my garden a-singing out of a heretic hymn book which I had of a ragged fellow for a penny. He told me he had discovered it on the body of an Englishman near Fort Orange, whom some Indians had shot and scalped and kicked aside.

I have a voice which is not unmusical; and when my thoughts are agreeable I am inclined to sing.

So, with my thoughts full of Jeanne Hérouard, I sat on my settle in the sunshine of my garden and sang out of the heretic hymn book:

*"Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place
Since generations knew Thy grace!
Before the Mountains were brought forth
From West to East, from South to North—
E'er Thou hadst made the human race—
Throughout all everlasting Space
Hast Thou existed! At Thy nod
Man and the World were born, O God!"*

Josephine and her cat came into the garden, the one to gather herbs for an eel ragoût, the other to yawn and blink in the sunshine.

So I, intoxicated with love, sang away there in the sun.

Josephine regarded me uneasily now and then, knowing full well that folk of the true Faith sang their hymns in Latin only. The cat did not seem to be disturbed, however.

So I sang as lustily as a robin on a picket fence; and presently noticed the scarlet hood of Nick o' the Wood outside my own picket gate.

"Come in, my forest-running brother," said I, "and you shall drink your morning draught with me!"

He sauntered in, carrying his gun.

He said that two more ships had anchored before the city; that they had sent ashore their letters, and that he had in his wallet a letter directed to me, which he discovered at the tavern.

Josephine fetched him a jack o' beer.

The foam left a half-moon on his thick lips. He wiped them with deerskin sleeve.

"Grignon-Palladine has gone aboard the ships to smell out heretics," said he, looking hard at my hymn book.

I made a wry face and spat: "Mother Mary, what an errand to sicken one," said I. "As for heretics, I know nothing concerning them only that they sing tuneful hymns. . . . Is there news from the Château?"

"The Marquis has called a council of war. They sit."

"That's what I await," said I, "—to learn whether I am to stop the Huron Rat at Fort Frontenac."

"Why stop him?" growled Nick. "Monsieur the Marquis does not want war."

Nick took another full pull at his leather jack. "Ah," said he, wiping his wet lips, "war will come, nevertheless; and unless our Marquis makes it in Onondaga those Iroquois panthers will make it here under his noble nose."

"That is my opinion," said I. "Give me my letter, Nick."

The letter was from Madame de Frontenac; and it disturbed and angered me, yet thrilled me with a fierce and reckless joy.

My poor friend [she wrote], here is a basket of foul family linen which I am going to wash under your offended nose! Why? Because my unhappy husband loves you. And so do I. And so does Mademoiselle d'Outrelaise.

And so, alas, does my pretty cousin, Jeanne Hérouard! Madly!

She did not wish to marry her Grignon. No! She swore at him. She was wild with grief. And my husband and I, who have no influence at court, now, ventured to intercede for her. Useless.

Yet, I think the King might have yielded, but Madame de Maintenon willed it. God knows what debt she had to pay to those Grignons!

Well, the fellow was determined to have her and he got her. The shadow—not the substance! And on their wedding night Jeanne Hérouard swore she never would lie in the same bed with him and told him she loved only you and would die loving you, and a virgin to the end.

Lord! The rage and consternation of the great fool! He ran to me; he ran to my husband; he ran to the King with loud cries, who, I hear, tried not to laugh, and sent this immaculate cuckold to Maintenon.

She and her Jesuits and nuns, with their arms full of holy books concerning marriage and wifely duty, so beset the child that she took refuge with me. And I think that she would not have gone back to her husband at all only that Maintenon and Père la Chaise, whose tool he was in the Dragonnades, devised a rich salary for him and a commissionership to go to Canada and exterminate all heretics.

Well, no sooner does Jeanne Hérouard hear of that than she consents to see him. Covered with ridicule and disgrace because his wife had run away from him, pursued by vulgar ballads and verses and street-jests, he came and begged her to return on any terms.

She made her terms. He had to accept. But all she wanted was to go to Canada because—O, my poor friend—you are there! Which is like women of my race, I know them only too well!

But do not flatter yourself! Whatever women of my race may think about their husbands, their husbands' honour always is safe with them. *I ought to know what I am saying!*

Wait, my friend. This is not all. I am to inform you

that you and my poor husband have made enemies, and powerful ones, in Paris. Salignac de Fénelon is one. Perrot is another. Do you wonder? My husband kicked them out of Quebec and you executed the kick! You kicked out the Abbé d'Urfé, too. His cousin is the Marquise d'Allègre. She married Seignelay who—God help you!—is the son of Colbert. The great minister Colbert! And the uncle of Perrot's wife is Talon whom you and my husband flouted! I think you bade him wipe his snout.

The Superior of the priests of Montreal is a particular friend of Colbert. As for Fénelon, he has allied himself by marriage to Colbert.

Now, Monsieur, what do you suppose the Sulpitians think of you? The Jesuits? The Ursulines? And *what* do you suppose the Maintenon thinks of you? Oh, my unhappy friend, what do you imagine Grignon thinks of you and of my husband, who left him gaping and squirting blood like a speared fish at Isle Savary?

And you, from whom he stole Jeanne Hérouard, and learned, too late, that he had married only her bodice and petticoat, and that her heart was yours and her body her own!

I tell you, my jaunty friend, beware of this Grignon who now calls himself also Palladine. If he can do you a filthy turn he will; and there are in Paris only too many to applaud him—and at *St. Cyr*, too!

I send this by a different ship than the one Monsieur Grignon sails on.

Alas, poor Canada! If my husband only had kept his temper he would have made of her a great empire.

Maybe, even yet. Who knows? I never cease to intrigue. And I have very powerful friends at court.

Who knows but the next ship will bring to Canada a man who, with all his terrible faults and exaggerations and tempers and excesses, is, after all, a real man. And a great one.

Because, I think, he is today the only man in all France capable of saving the New World to the French crown!

Monsieur, adieu. In my weary heart there is, for you, a very warm and intimate place.

I beg you never to forget it.

ANNE DE LA GRANGE,

Countess of Frontenac.

Chapter XXXI

ALONE in my house, in the large, empty room, I sat and considered God; and what love is; and read in my Huguenot hymn book. And awaited word from the Château. I say that I pondered on love. And how to obtain it despite God and man.

To some men, if love comes at all, it comes in vain. As it had once before come to me.

I loved Nellie, I think. I loved her still—as one loves what one *has* loved.

It is difficult for me to explain what was the quality of my love for Nell Gwyn. I loved her first when I saw her sifting cinders. I loved her when I drew the new, warm stockings over her little icy, frost-bitten feet. I loved her when riding with Chamilly's yelling cavalry. And, when I bade her adieu in the tire room at the King's House, I loved her. But I can not remember that in my love for her there ever was any passion. Which seems strange; for she always was doomed to inspire desire in men. Well, *en fin*, I know not what exactly might be the substance of my very tender love for Eleanor Gwyn.

But I knew instantly how I loved Jeanne Hérouard. There was no way in which I did not love her. And, utterly to no purpose.

And thus, as I say, love comes to some—useless, without purpose, thwarted, hopeless, sterile.

But as for me, I had had enough of sterile love. And meant to make this bud and fruit at any cost.

I continued to sit there in my empty room, the Huguenot book on my knees, silent, staring out at the sunshine in my

garden; and I wondered what I was to do about this passionate love which so fiercely had surprised and overwhelmed me.

Go to the forest and try to forget? I could not leave it behind me in Quebec. Go back to France? To England? To what end when I knew I must carry my passion with me?

Would distractions of mind aid me to endure? War? Perils? Would study help—the reading of books—like this forbidden book lying upon my knees? Would a monastery prove a refuge? Self-abandonment to God? *Which God?* Or was there really none for heretics?

While I was sitting there, a-thinking, my head in my hands, bowed over the Huguenot book which lay, now, upon the unpainted hickory table, I heard Josephine talking to somebody at the kitchen door, but did not heed.

After a while the door behind me opened. I thought it was Josephine. Presently I looked around and saw Jeanne Hérouard standing there in the hazy, curtained sunshine of the room.

When I sprang up and went to her she made a slight gesture waving me aside, and walked to the table and stood there looking down at my heretic hymn book.

After a moment she turned toward me: "Where got you this, Monsieur?"

I told her.

She inquired coldly whether I wished to be arrested, made destitute, and exiled. I said that I did not care what happened to me if I could not have the woman I loved.

"You would care," said she, "if Monsieur de Frontenac should return to Quebec."

I had not considered that and it began to worry me as I thought about it.

"Jeanne," said I, "why have you suddenly walked into my house through the kitchen door this morning?"

"Dame! If I had arrived in a gilded chair and my foot-

man had knocked at your front door, all Quebec would know what I was about."

She began to laugh and to walk about and examine the bare room. In it were two chairs, a table, a few orthodox books on a shelf, and an earthen pot in which Josephine had planted reseda.

She read, attentively, the titles of all the books, her slim, graceful figure lifted on tip-toe to see them on the shelf. I noticed diamond buckles on her small shoes, and clocks on her silken stockings of lilac hue.

Her bodice and her bouffant skirt, also, were pale lilac with a breadth of embroidery that fell from waist to instep—a tangle of silver vines with frosty-green leaves and little salmon-coloured flowers.

She wore no hat, no gloves; only a scarf and a jewelled fontange; and a delicate mist of lace fell from her hanging sleeves to the bare, blue-veined curve of her inner arm.

"Do you offer me a chair, Monsieur?" she asked. And calmly seated herself as I moved to assist her.

She said: "There is a council of war at the Château this morning. So I took my maid and went shopping in the lower town"—glancing at me demurely—"Yes. I can not imagine how we became separated, my capable little maid and I."

She was so adorable in her malice that I could not take my eyes from her.

"As for this," she went on, turning over the leaves of the forbidden book, "it is very dangerous to have it here in your house. Do you know that?"

"I suppose so."

"Because," said she, "it might easily be discovered by unfriendly people."

"Are there people other than yourself who are unfriendly to me in Quebec, Madame?"

"I think so," she said gravely.

"I think so, too," said I. "Monsieur the Governor, for instance. And Monsieur de Champigny. . . . And, possibly—others. Monsieur your husband, for example."

She sat silent, ruffling the leaves of the dangerous book, and looking out of the window.

"Yes," she said, nodding her head, "and others; as you say. . . . For example, those who sold you a heretic hymnal for a penny."

I was startled. She continued, coolly: "That is why I came to see you, Monsieur, and not for your beaux yeux, as your masculine conceit no doubt suggests."

"I thought it merely curiosity," said I, reddening.

"Really? Well, then, let us be honest; I admit a little curiosity, too. Even cats have that." She turned in her chair, leaning on the arm of it, and looked intently at me.

"Yes, it was a trap," she said. "The fellow who sold it to you for a sou never saw Fort Orange. It is known at the Bishop's Palace that you have this heretics' book. When they are ready they expect to find it here. I thought I had better come and tell you—before they came."

It was anger that brought the blood into my face again, but when I opened my lips to speak she stopped me with a gesture:

"You would not be indelicate enough to inquire of me how I learned this," she said. . . . "I ask your pardon for interrupting you, Monsieur—you were about to speak?"

That, against me, there was such animosity in Quebec I could scarcely believe. I said this to her and she shrugged her shoulders:

"Why not? You are known as a close friend of Count Frontenac, who clapped Perrot into jail and sent him and Fénelon back to France in disgrace. These two are very powerfully connected in Paris, Monsieur."

I remained silent.

"You have the ill will of the Sulpitians because of what

Monsieur de Frontenac did to their Governor of Montreal. And it was you who carried out the order. And you laughed when you did it."

"Yes, I did."

"Further, you are too kind to outlaws."

"To the Coureurs-de-Bois? Well, yes, I am. I am almost one myself."

"Added to that, you are not very pious. The Marquis is; so is the Intendant."

"No," said I, "I don't read the Psalms of David while my soldiers are brutalizing and murdering Huguenots."

"Ah," said she, "there you go! You are like Count Frontenac,—not discreet! When you say such things in taverns, don't think for a moment they are not carried straight to the Intendant's Palace. They *are*."

"Madame," said I, "all this sickens me. And if I am to live my life cringing in this unhappy land in fear of the Château, the two Palaces, St. Cyr, and the Seminary, then I had better be gone with my penny hymnal—"

"Whither?"

I drew a long breath.

"I don't know," said I, "but the Turk is less bigoted."

"Tolerant of beliefs, but with a strange taste for human heads on orange trees."

"Very well, Madame, what shall I do?"

"Get rid of your heretic book and remain here."

"Why?"

"Because," she said, "I believe that Count Frontenac will return to govern New France. . . . I know only that my cousin, the Countess, never ceases intriguing to that end. And usually she gets what she wants."

She lifted her grey eyes, deeply fringed with black—eyes clear as a child's and as lovely and unmarred: "Can you not have a little patience?" she asked.

"Yes—if you wish."

"Because," said she, "all my life, so far, I have had to have patience with everybody, with everything—with Fate, with Destiny, with the King himself. . . . I am very, very old in patience, Monsieur."

"Perhaps," said I, "you have learned patience since you threw books at my head."

"Ah, yes," she said, "but you seem to have learned nothing since you committed unspeakable indignities upon my person!"

Suddenly her clear laughter pealed.

"Oh, Jeanne," said I, "I am truly sorry!"

"I don't believe you," said she; "probably you would do it again if I angered you."

We laughed together as we had not laughed since she was a child. Then she rose with decision:

"Monsieur, I must depart—and by the kitchen door. Pray rid yourself of your heretic book before it is discovered."

"I could bury it in my garden."

"That is not safe."

"Jeanne, are you truly concerned for my safety—"

She brushed aside my hand which sought hers and looked out of the window.

"Oh—my God," said she in a startled voice, "here come my husband and two troopers of Monsieur de Champigny's guard!"

I ran to the window and looked out.

"He told me he had gone to search for heretics in the two new ships," she said in a horrified whisper.

"Perhaps," said I, "he also spies on you."

Chapter XXXII

GRIGNON and three troopers of the Intendant's guard had already dismounted and were now knocking loudly upon my front door. Two more soldiers rode up to guard the back door. We were caught.

Jeanne Hérouard cast an exasperated glance about her: "What stupidity!" she muttered; "I thought he was aboard the ships a-smelling out heretics!"

She laughed nervously, caught my eye; and I said:

"One word from you and I make this my own affair. Have I your leave, Jeanne?"

She said, still smiling: "You'd like an excuse to kill him if you only dared believe I were a little in love with you. Listen! If you draw sword on him you lose me forever."

We stood listening to the loud, impatient knocking.

I said: "Jeanne, let me protect you now and always."

"Protect *me*!" She laughed again, bitterly. "My poor friend," said she, "I came here to protect *you*! What else do you suppose brought me here? A shameless passion?"

"I wish it had been that."

"No doubt. I almost wish so, too. It's ridiculous to be trapped when innocent. As for you, it is going to go very badly with you if they find your heretic book. That is why I came to warn you." She took hold of my arm:

"Hide that accursed book somewhere," said she; "he knows you bought it. They set a trap for you. They want only this excuse to ship you back to France."

A shower of blows fell upon my door. They were hammering on it with sword-hilt and pistol-butt. I heard them shouting, too,—*"In the King's name! Open!"*

I looked about me for some place to conceal the book.

"No!" she said desperately, "they'll search the house! They'll send you back to France! Sang dieu! Have I come all these thousands of miles for your sake only to lose you now?"

"For *my* sake, Jeanne?"

"My God! Why do you think I ever came to this accursed country?" she cried exasperated. "Not that it will do you any good—or me!—I mean any harm. Because I am not going to love you."

"Jeanne!"

"Very well, yes, I love you! But—I am not going to. I can't control my guilty heart. But I mean to control my guiltless conduct. With God's help. And yours. Don't flatter yourself that I'm weak enough to court damnation. Or push you into hell! I won't. I don't hope it."

The blows on my door were filling the house with an outrageous racket. I could scarcely hear her voice, in the deafening din.

I shouted into her lovely and distracted little ear that I loved her, and she shouted back with all her might that she was glad of it and that we must both pray constantly to the Queen of Heaven to keep us sinless.

As the door splintered and seemed about to give way, she snatched the heretic book from my hand. There came a flurry of silken skirts, a glitter of diamond garters; and:

"There!" said she breathlessly, "it's hid between bodice and body. And I hope God pardons you for looking at my legs!"

I bawled into her ear: "They are more beautiful than Aphrodite's—"

"They are well enough, I hope." . . . She shook out and smoothed her bouffant skirts. . . . "I think you had better open that door," she shouted; "the noise in this house is becoming unendurable!"

"So is Monsieur your husband," I bawled; "and I hope you will permit me to take him by the throat."

"No!" she shouted back; "you horrify me!"

"—Or by the nose—"

"Never! Tell your servant to come and open that door. I can't stand this noise any longer."

I went toward the kitchen yelling for Josephine, who came in, dreadfully frightened.

"Open the door," said I, "and fetch the house keys."

I cast one unhappy, wistful glance at my sword which, with my shoulder-belt, dangled near me from a peg; then I strolled forward to receive my guests as Josephine drew the bolt and opened the shaking door.

Count Grignon-Palladine came in. Seeing me he took off his hat. His face was sweating and very pale; but his manners were excellent. He did not seem to be at all surprised to encounter his wife. His bow to her was so elaborate that the point of his sword stuck up toward the ceiling under his laced mantle.

"Madame," said he, "it has been a beautiful day to go shopping in the lower town. I noticed your chair there."

"Did you discover any heretics aboard the ships?" she inquired coolly.

"I am led to believe, Madame, that they are not *all* on shipboard."

The reddish fixity of his gaze shifted to me; and he moistened his dry lips with his tongue which was bluish.

But his manner remained entirely civil. He said to me that he regretted his errand; that certain information had been laid against me; that, as special Royal Commissioner, he was obliged to take cognizance of such information. And he bowed to me and offered me an Intendant's police warrant of arrest and search.

When I had read it I returned the paper to him; he called

in two soldiers; and I told Josephine to take the keys and open everything for their inspection.

All, so far, had gone quietly and correctly, although I wanted to take him by the throat. I don't know exactly what he wanted to do to me and to his wife, but his reddish eyes had become two little smouldering coals.

"Monsieur," he said in his shrill voice, "you are suspected of an inclination toward the reformed faith. Are you a Calvinist?"

Such meddling enraged me, but, glancing at Jeanne, I recovered my self-control and I told him that I was neither Calvinist nor Jansenist nor infidel nor pagan.

He asked me if I had, in my personal possession, any books of a forbidden nature.

"Not now," said I, "but I did buy a heretic hymnal from one of your spies."

He looked instantly at his wife who stood by the window gazing out.

She said, without turning: "You will, of course, remark to Monsieur Stanhope that a gentleman of your quality does not employ spies to betray other gentlemen."

He turned very red. "Madame," said he in his high, shrill voice, "any question of treachery and betrayal can be more properly discussed between Monsieur Stanhope and me—if I have enough curiosity to make inquiry concerning your behaviour."

She turned scarlet under the insult; her lips quivered; otherwise she did not stir. A cold but controlled rage possessed me. I said:

"As for your curiosity—I suppose that Monsieur de Frontenac and I had already satisfied that."

Jeanne turned and said to me: "Monsieur, pray be kind enough to send your servant to the lower town for my chair. It is at Barbier's, the linen merchant."

I went to the kitchen and instructed Josephine. But the guards outside would not let her leave the house.

"Monsieur," said Jeanne to her husband, "have the complaisance to send a trooper for my chair. I desire to return to the Château."

As she spoke, the two guards came up from the cellar, very dirty. They had discovered nothing.

"Fetch picks and dig," said the Count. "Examine the garden, also, and dig wherever you choose." He went to the front door and I heard him call to one of his troopers to ride to the lower town and send Madame's chair and bearers.

It was an hour before they arrived; and all the while he stood by the window looking out at the men digging in my garden, but keeping us within his view.

When her chair was announced Jeanne came to me and gave me her hand. I kissed it respectfully.

"Courage," said she. "It is such gentlemen as Count Frontenac and you whom they wish to be rid of at any cost." She turned an insolent gaze upon her husband: "And, sang dieu!" she said, "here is what they select to take your places!"

"Madame," he cried in his shrill voice, "am I to endure your insults in public as well as in private?"

"Run to Denonville and complain," said she. "Run to Champigny and the Bishop, making ridiculous noises. Better still, run to St. Cyr—"

"Madame!"

"Sang dieu!" she said contemptuously, "run to Versailles for all I care! Tell the King! Tell Colbert! Run to St. Cyr and emit pious lamentations!"

"Madame," he fairly screamed, "do you wish to be ruined!"

She looked at me; laughed.

"I don't know," said she. "Possibly. Everything, everybody is being ruined—Frontenac, Monsieur Stanhope here, Canada—I might as well be ruined, too."

She walked reflectively to the window, glanced out, slowly retraced her steps:

"It is a pity," said she to me, "that this New World should be already stained with all the wickedness and tyranny of the Old. One would hope to find somewhere—in all this endless wilderness—some refuge—"

She shrugged, looked up and smiled at me.

"Ruined?" she repeated, turning toward me once more, "—well, yes; since it seems to be the fashion to ruin one's self or one's neighbour, I also may try my hand at it. . . . Ruin my credit in heaven. Bankrupt myself at Versailles. And with Père la Chaise who decimates France for the glory of God. And with Denonville, who first arrests Monsieur Stanhope and then prepares to charm the Iroquois with a mirliton—"

Grignon, beside himself, made a shrill sound like a squeal and ran at his wife like a great rat:

"Will you be silent!" he cried. "Do you suppose your rank and position are going to protect you if you say such things at the top of your voice where soldiers and servants are able to hear you—"

"Fiddle-de-dee," said she; "go back to the ships and frighten poor Huguenots, but don't think to terrify me. You and your police, after all, are not the Holy Office, you know."

"Will you take your chair and bearers and return to your apartments!" he demanded, choking with fury.

"Yes, I think I will," said she cheerfully. She made me a gay little gesture of adieu, turned, and departed with a light and graceful step through the shattered door.

When she had disappeared: "Monsieur," said I to Grignon, "all this suppressed emotion of yours ought to have an outlet or your health may suffer. A little exercise behind my barn with a pair of swords, and I guarantee you perfect health, even if you are dead—"

"You are mad," he said staring at me.

"No," said I, "because you will permit me to observe that the dead are always in good health, although the living sometimes fall ill—"

"Except," said he, shrilly, "that his Majesty's commission forbids it, I would take you at your word, Monsieur."

"I was afraid that your Commission might forbid duelling."

"I regret it," he said politely.

"I am sorry, too," said I. "Another time, then, if the Iroquois don't murder us in our beds."

He bowed, picked up his hat and gloves, bowed again.

"What does the Marquis intend to do with me?" I enquired.

"Convene the Council and bring you before it," he replied drily.

This news both startled, angered, and sobered me. I had seen Fénelon before the Council when Frontenac presided. I had no desire to confront these gentlemen.

"Am I to go to the Château prison?" I enquired in disgust.

He informed me that I was to remain in my own house as a prisoner under guard. Well, that was to be preferred, although any confinement was bad enough for a man who had become so accustomed to free air and the liberty of the wilderness.

Well, Grignon took himself off after prowling about a little longer. I accompanied him to the door where he took his hat off and then himself.

Discovering nothing to incriminate me, he had stationed two soldiers within my house. Later somebody sent two cot beds for them, so that I was obliged to quarter them in the garret.

In other words, I discovered that I was under very strict arrest in my own house, not permitted to set foot even in my

own garden, and subjected to constant surveillance of two soldiers.

A plague of priests and monks and police from the Intendant's Palace immediately descended upon me; and these people continued to come at all hours to question me, exhort me, and otherwise annoy me.

However, I was not as badly off as had been Fénelon and Perrot whom Count Frontenac kept locked up in the Château prison all those months. *I* locked them up. No doubt I was now paying for it.

Before I had learned to take pleasure in the freedom of forest life this confinement would not have so utterly oppressed me. But I had lost all taste for the inside of houses. I had even lost my taste for reading. And to remain idle indoors now tired my patience and bored me to extinction.

Besides, that last hour with Jeanne Hérouard had excited me to a degree that the fever born of it kept me so restless that, from the beginning, my imprisonment was almost unendurable.

Except to think about Jeanne Hérouard, and to go over and over in my mind everything she had said and done, I had no interesting occupation.

I played chess with my jailers; I continued to carve and engrave a new powder-horn with which I had been fiddling at intervals for nearly a year; I commanded a tailoress to come from Beaupré to measure me and make for me a new forest dress of finest doe-skin, deep fringed from shouldercape to cuff and from hip to ankle.

Also I employed a young Miami woman to embroider it with tinted quills and beads, make a gay belt for it, and buckskin sheathes for hatchet and knife.

As long as I had been arrested for heresies, I was sorry I did not have my heretic hymn book to sing out of.

One moonlit evening Nick o' the Woods and some for-

est-runners and Huron girls, who had been skylarking along the côte, came under my window and called out to me.

"Everybody in Quebec knows you are under detention," said Nick. "A fine time to lock up such gentlemen as you."

"Is there news of the Iroquois Embassy?" I asked, leaning on my window sill to look down at them.

"None. That is really what terrifies us who know those wolves. Their silence is always terrible."

"Is there news of The Rat and his war party?"

"None. The Marquis has sent out messengers to stop him at Fort Frontenac and warn him not to meddle with the Iroquois ambassadors."

"He knows well enough," said I, "that, if he lets Denonville make peace with the Iroquois, the Iroquois will destroy every Huron, Illinois, and Ottawa in Canada."

"Denonville," cried a voice from the darkness below, "should declare war instantly and carry it to the Mohawk."

"Certainly," added Nick. "If he doesn't, The Rat will force war, and the Iroquois will carry it to our back doors. . . . Monsieur?"

"Yes."

"With what crime are you charged, that they shut you up here at such a time?"

"They think me a heretic."

Nick cursed and spat on the grass. "Ah," he cried fiercely, "even the savages respect one another's religious opinions. The Rock stinks of too many monks and priests."

Somebody said in a low voice: "Why doesn't Monsieur escape? The forest is a sanctuary for such things."

Somebody else had a fiddle and began strumming and picking on the strings.

Nick spoke to an Algonquin girl whom he called Drifting Rain:

"Come over here, you pretty slut," said he, "and sing a

pretty war-song to entertain Monsieur de Stanhope before we depart."

The fiddler played a strange little theme with his bow, then he strummed and thumped the monotonous rhythm on his fiddle strings, and they all chanted the familiar:

*"Ha wa sa say
Ha wa sa say—Hah!—"*

until the Delaware girl suddenly appeared in the starlight and began a sort of slow, dainty, stamping dance. Then she broke out into the endless, sombre, Battle-Bird theme called *Pe-na-se-wuh*, singing it after the manner of the Ojibway *Awasi* clan:

*"Penasewuh
Pe-misque-oshe-wuh
A-za-wau-she-wuh
Penasewuh!
Na-mah-je-eyeh!
Ne-me-kunah-eyeh!
Baim-iawa!
Undos-e-wuh,
Penasewuh,—
Baim-iawa!—"*

Which was as much as to say in English:

*"O War-Birds,
Circle low,
Rush on my foe!
O War-Birds,
Scream and wail
Above my trail;*

*I hear the roar of your flight
Through the cloudy height:
And my foes wonder
At your iron wings' thunder!—"*

It means something like that, anyway,—God alone understands Algonquin.

I called down to her in her own tongue: "Thank you, kwan audja wi equwah! Mi eu wa iau ya umbaumn!" *

The girl laughed, flung one arm around Nick's neck and danced away into the starlight with him. The others, joining hands, raced after them; and the fiddler, fiddling madly, capered in the rear.

If hell suddenly opened I think all Canada would join hands and dance gaily into it to the screech of a habitant's fiddle.

* "Thank you, pretty girl! That is just exactly what I wanted!"

Chapter XXXIII

NOT until several weeks after my arrest was I summoned to appear before the Superior Council. Lord! Here was a pretty roost of fowl in their various feathers; Denonville presided in gay plumage; corselet, spurs, plumes; others were the Intendant clothed in blue and gold; the Bishop of Quebec wearing ominous robes; the Attorney-General in his scarlet and black; his secretary; seven solemn councillors; and several huissiers all in feathers characteristic of such birds.

While Saint-Vallier was thumbing his pectoral cross and twirling his ring and questioning me, Grignon came into the chamber, all ribbons and powder and perfumed like a scent-bottle. I made a polite representation to the assembled official gentlemen, the magistracy, and scarlet-sleeved bourgeoisie that this man's meddlesome appearance in council was highly irregular and prejudicial to my interests.

"It seems to me," remarked the Attorney-General impudently, "that it would be more respectful of Monsieur de Stanhope to testify seriously instead of quibbling over frivolous questions of procedure."

"It seems to me," said I, "that the Attorney-General's ignorance of good manners is equalled only by his frivolous ignorance of law—"

"Gentlemen!" interrupted Denonville, "I must beg you to observe the ordinary conventions—at least before the Superior Council! It is not a question of law; it is a question of good breeding."

"The gens-de-robe," said I, "are bred to the law, but I don't know what other marks of breeding they may boast—"

"Monsieur Stanhope, if you *please!*" protested Denonville, turning a deep red.

Maybe it was his half armour which made him perspire.

"Oh, very well then," said I; "let Monsieur de Grignon remain—"

"*Count de Grignon-Palladine,*" interrupted and corrected that gentleman coldly.

"I see," said I, bowing; "the value of the magpie lies only in his borrowed tail—"

Denonville stood up, exasperated, and everybody appeared scandalized.

"My God," said I, "it is only *Æsop* I am quoting!"

Denonville represented to me that such remarks were highly improper. I replied that I was sorry and would not again mention tail feathers in the Royal Commissioner's presence.

When at last their ruffled feelings had been a little composed, a fat huissier fetched a chair for Grignon, and he sat himself upon it to brood over his outraged dignity and to squint sideways out of his small, reddish eyes to see if anybody were laughing at him.

The carping interrogatory began again concerning my suspected orthodoxy; my alleged mischievous aversion to Denonville's political and military policy; my opposition to the Iroquois Embassy; my general conduct in the King's forest—whether I ever had any evil dealings in peltry above Montreal; whether I held forbidden communication with Fort Orange; and whether I once had said that it was as great a crime to sell the Indians French brandy as it was to sell them English rum.

Also I was asked whether I ever had said that only Count Frontenac could save Canada to the French crown.

"Yes," I answered, "I said that. And I did say what you charge me with saying about French brandy and English rum. Also, I do believe we shall have a very bloody

war here at our own back doors if a peace is made with the Iroquois. Further, I never had any forbidden traffic in beaver, nor stopped any Indian or trapper from the upper lakes for such unlawful purpose. But I do believe that the forests belong to God and not to the King of France.

"Nor am I a heretic, although constant meddling with my personal convictions might drive me toward any other faith that does not persecute private conscience."

This so horrified Denonville that he rose and clapped his hat on his head and declared the session closed until a further conference had clarified the serious situation.

He bowed stiffly to me; so did the others. I returned their salutes, put on my hat and went out, flanked by my two soldier guards; and so came presently again to my own house at Côte d'Auros.

Never had I been so bored and disgusted. There was more bigotry, intrigue, tyranny here in Canada than in Europe. It was plain enough that these people were bent on getting rid of me. Had it not been for Jeanne Hérourd the thought of exile would not have troubled me so deeply. But the prospect of separation both angered and scared me.

Since the day of my arrest I had neither seen her nor heard news of her, nor had any word from her in all those weeks of my detention.

More than that, for weeks, now, I had not had any news of the Iroquois situation, or learned whether their red ambassadors had arrived with belts; or heard anything concerning the Huron Rat, Kondiaronk, and his war party out of the North.

Somebody might have been kind enough to come under my window at night and whisper the news to me.

Where was Nick o' the Woods? Where was Greysolon, who ruled the Coureurs-de-Bois? Where was the solemn Sieur de la Chine, whose seigniorly smelled so fancifully of the Vermilion Sea and Cathay?

Where was my forest comrade, Henri of the severed hand—bravest of forest rangers? Why had none of these sent me any word or paid me any attention during these endless and tiresome days of captivity?

As the long days of summer passed and the time approached for the sailing of the autumn ships to France, my apprehensions increased and I became convinced that Grignon had persuaded the Marquis, the Bishop, and the Intendant to send me back to France as Frontenac had packed off Fénelon.

If this were so, the only way to avoid it was to escape from my window to the woods. If ever taken, the punishment, of course, was death. Moreover, it would be an ignoble death; and I remembered how Frontenac had hung one of Perrot's forest outlaws and left the body dangling in front of Perrot's window.

However, had I meant to escape I ought to have done so in the beginning. Because, since haled before the Superior Council, one of the soldiers in the house always remained on guard; and, at night, a light-horseman from the Governor's guard was stationed under my window where he slowly rode up and down the garden path or sat wrapped in his blue cloak yawning up at the moon.

Sometimes I played at cards or chess with the soldier in the house; or, at my open window, gossiped with the light-horseman.

But they never would tell me anything, so I learned nothing from them concerning the political situation or my own fate.

The horseman who always guarded me was a sentimental young man from La Chine, named Jacques Picard, and he used to sit on his horse and sing:

*"Josephine, my Josephine,
Pretty rose-bud of La Chine,*

*Ah, how happy we might be
Sailing the Vermilion Sea!
Ching-la-la and far away—
Ching-la-la and far away—
Far beyond St. Louis Bay
Lies the country of Cathay!
To the land of gem and jade,
Mandarin and dancing maid—
Hasten with your lover bold!
You shall walk in silk and gold,
Pretty rose-bud of La Chine,
Josephine, my Josephine!
Ching-la-la!
Ching-la-la!
Josephine, my Josephine!"*

One moonlight night in July, leaning from my open window, I looked about in the moonlight for my light-horseman and could not discover him.

As he had never failed to mount guard after nightfall, I supposed he was prowling around somewhere in the darkness of the young orchard with an eye on my lighted window.

Now, while I was peering about and listening for the distant jingle of spur and bit and scabbard, suddenly and silently a shadow passed along the garden wall. The next instant I saw, under my window, a Récollette nun garbed in the brown and white habit of her order, looking up at me in the moonlight.

Chapter XXXIV

“**M**ONSIEUR,” she called to me in a guarded voice, “can you help me up?”

“Good heavens, Jeanne, can that be *you!*”

“Yes. Could you let down a sheet from your bed and pull me up? I’ll hold on very tight.”

I ran to my bed, snatched a sheet from it, blew out the candle and, leaning far down from the window ledge, dropped the sheet.

“Have you strength to pull me up?” she whispered.

“Yes. Tie the sheet under your arms if you can—”

“It isn’t long enough. I’ll hold tight. Pull!”

She clung to it like a cat and wound both legs around it. I braced a knee against the sill and hauled her up, over, into the room, and caught her as she was falling full length upon the floor.

“Holy Virgin,” she gasped, “what strength you have! I shot up into the air like a shaft from a bow! Oh, lord, my shins! But it doesn’t matter—I am so happy to see you, Monsieur—but for God’s sake don’t embrace me—”

She twisted out of my arms—repulsed me with outstretched hands which, however, she suffered me to cover with kisses.

“There,” said she breathlessly, “that is enough. Where are the two soldiers?”

“One snores in the garret; the other sits in the kitchen with the cat. Oh, Jeanne, my darling—”

“Hush! You are not to say such things! I came here out of compassion, not out of love!—”

“Do you tell me that you have no tenderness for me?”

"My impertinent friend, I shall tell you something more interesting than that. How do you suppose I arrived here?"

"I am wondering—"

She stifled an excited laugh with both hands.

"Let me tell you," said she close to my ear; "the Marquis Governor, the haughty Marquise, and their solemn demoiselle daughter, started this morning for Montreal."

"What! Denonville!"

"This morning at seven," she nodded. "My enterprising husband went with them; also the Governor's troop of light-horse—"

"Why?"

"I don't know," she said impatiently; "listen! My agitated and ever suspicious husband packed me off to the Récollettes to remain until he returned. . . . I'm ashamed to tell you why—"

She began to laugh again, but clapped both hands to her lips.

"He was quite right," she whispered; "I meant to come to see you at the first opportunity. And here I am! Oh, not because of any ignoble passion, Monsieur, but I have a great deal to tell you. Listen! After he had gone away this morning I saw on his writing table an order for Monsieur de Champigny to detail every night a horseman from the Intendant's troop of horse to replace the light-horseman from the Governor's troop.

"The hour named was eight o'clock. I took a pen, crossed out the 'eight' and wrote 'twelve'—"

Laughter overcame her once more and she stifled it in her perfumed handkerchief, looking at me out of brilliant eyes moist with mirth.

"The rest," she managed to whisper, "was simple. I begged a habit in the Récollette convent and requested a cell in which to meditate. After sunset I walked thoughtfully through the garden and, always thoughtfully, into the

street. Nobody noticed me. It's a long walk to your house, Monsieur. Only a heart full of tenderest compassion could have found courage—"

I threw myself on my knees before her, but she would not even abandon her hands to me, and swore she would never utter another word if I so much as touched her.

"Jeanne," I pleaded, "you tell me you have had compassion on me—"

"Compassion, but not passion, Monsieur. You would behead that gentle word if I allowed it. Allons! Under a gentleman's roof there is always sanctuary, is there not?"

I reddened.

She smothered a malicious little laugh: "Particularly for a nun," she added.

She had been seated on the only chair in the room, and I remained standing. Now she rose lightly, pushed the chair toward me, ran over and seated herself on the bed.

"Tell that to my husband," said she, "and he'll sprout a pair of horns like any cuckold!"

At that she went into another fit of noiseless laughter and sat rocking to and fro, regarding me, and swinging her slender feet. Presently she pointed at them and thrust them out to show me her rough woolen stockings and nun's coarse shoes.

"See how holy I am become!—how humble and meek I am; how unworldly! I am growing to be as pious as Denonville! And yet you dared to kiss my hands in a disrespectful manner!"

"Jeanne!"

"You did! You kissed the palms of my hands!"

"It was like kissing warm roses—"

"You are impertinent!"

She crossed her legs and began to swing them nervously to and fro, watching the shadow they cast on the moonlit floor.

"That, then, is my reward for coming here," she said, "to be so impudently kissed when I come only to bring you wonderful news—"

"What news!"

"A letter from Madame de Frontenac."

"Is there another ship arrived?" I asked, astonished.

"No. My letter came by an English sloop to the Banks, and by one of our bankers to Tadousac. A Souriquois fetched it. I gave him a livre d'or."

"It is unkind to keep me in suspense," I said in a low voice.

"I am kinder than are you who treat me like a grisette. . . . Using my person with violence! . . . Very well; I'll tell you; Monsieur de Frontenac is coming!"

The shock of joy so overcame me that I could not utter a word.

I saw her lean forward to peer at me through the darkness.

"Well?" she inquired. And, after a pause: "I can not see you, Monsieur. Come nearer."

I went to her and seated myself beside her.

"Are you contented?" she asked softly.

"The happiness—I find no words—"

"Is it not wonderful!" she said excitedly. "Denonville goes; Count Frontenac returns! My cousin writes that the King is very weary of the Marquis. She says that millions have been spent to send him troops and supplies; and to no purpose.

"Because the English in New York still mock us. Cromwell's old Parliamentary troopers in Boston still threaten us. The Iroquois still prowl our borders. Yes, even old Maintenon has had enough of Denonville."

"I humbly thank God," said I, steadying my voice.

She laid her hand lightly on my arm in the darkness:

"Monsieur," she whispered, "I only pray that Fröntenac arrives before the Iroquois."

"Is there news of the Iroquois?" I asked, startled.

"Their ambassadors have been murdered by Adario, the Huron Rat. Did you ever hear of anything so frightful? They were the ambassadors of the Five Nations. They were envoys of peace, belt-bearers, on their way to Quebec. Their persons were sacred. Adario shot them down!"

"Good God," I whispered, "I warned the Marquis. Our Hurons knew that, if peace were made, the Iroquois would turn on them and exterminate them. I told Denonville that The Rat would certainly try to prevent it. I told him that there never could be any peace for the Hurons or for us unless we carried war into the Iroquois country and destroyed them there."

"Poor Denonville," she said; "he wrote letters to the Iroquois saying that The Rat had betrayed him; and he begged that another embassy be sent to Quebec.

"But The Rat goes about boasting. 'I have killed the peace,' he says to our officers at Fort Frontenac; 'we shall see how the Governor will get out of this business!'"

"Has Denonville had any reply from the Iroquois?"

"Not a word."

"Jeanne," said I, "the Iroquois never will send another embassy to us. Those people never forget an injury. They do not believe Denonville. He betrayed them once. If, this time, he is innocent of treachery, they never will believe it."

I sprang to my feet and began to pace the floor.

"One would think," said I, bitterly, "that the Marquis had learned something of these savages by this time. He detests all Indians; possibly that is why he has learned nothing about them. . . . This continued silence in the direction of the Iroquois is ominous. . . . Why has the Marquis gone to Montreal?"

"I don't know," she sighed.

"What a fool," said I, "to suppose he could restrain The Rat. Any wild and desperate creature will employ cunning to save its own life. The Rat knew, if peace were made, that Denonville would abandon the Hurons, Ottawas, and Illinois to the fury of the Five Nations. . . . Who can blame this clever savage? No; I blame Denonville. If the Iroquois come upon us it is our Governor who will be to blame."

I came and stood by Jeanne Hérouard and looked down at her where she was sitting, very still and motionless, now.

"In such a time as this," said I, "Denonville, the Bishop, the Intendant, and your husband imprison me and plan to get rid of me. . . . In such a crisis they are busy only in making war on heretics. Or they quarrel about beaver skins and brandy!"

She lifted troubled eyes to me: "What is to be done, Monsieur?"

"Jeanne," said I, "if God is merciful, He will not unloose the Iroquois until Count Frontenac arrives. Because, I tell you, it is vain for Denonville to hope for another embassy. They'll never send one. But, unless he makes war *there*, they will make it *here*! And if he awaits attack he is ruined."

She began to shiver in her nun's garb, and clasped her hands together tightly.

After a while she rose, went to the window and looked up at the clear moon. I followed.

"See," she whispered, "how the river is become but a flood of moving silver. . . . How sweet the scent of flowers mounts from your garden. How tranquil is the darkened world tonight."

Somewhere in darkness a cow-bell tinkled; and in the moonlight a bird twittered very faintly.

"What hour is it, Monsieur?"

"Jeanne?"

"Yes?"

"Do you remember my name?"

After a long silence:

"What hour is it . . . Richard?"

We read the dial of my watch by the lustre of the moon. She drew a long, deep breath. I took her little, perfumed hand, kissed it, but she resisted, twisting it free.

"Because I love you," I breathed.

"No—no! That is no reason—"

"And you also have confessed—"

"But that is no reason, either!"

I put my arm around her and felt her heart beating under my hand.

"I—I beg you to respect me," she began to say, softly; "we are offending the Virgin Mother," she sobbed, "—when you touch my breast—"

Her fingers, resting on mine, closed convulsively.

"Be not too kind to me," she begged, "because I love you. . . . I am not ignorant, and I know quite well what we are about."

"You asked me once to kiss your lips."

"I remember."

But she would not; and turned her hot face aside; and her entire body stiffened against mine. But under my hand her heart was becoming violent.

"Jeanne, you must love me—"

"I do!"

"—body and soul!"

"Do you mean—shamefully?"

"I mean completely!"

"Oh," she sobbed, "have I been in love with you all these years for this?"

Tears strangled her voice again. She dropped her head

and rested it against my breast; and all her body went soft and warm against me, and her fingers relaxed in mine.

"Mother of God," she wept aloud, "he can not love me even for these few days but must try to lose us both! If that is your love I do not want it. I want nothing in this world any more," she sobbed, her tear-scented breath hot on my face.

"Hush!" I whispered, "somebody is coming."

She lifted her head like a startled wild thing and pressed close against me.

There came a low knocking at my door.

"Who is there?" I demanded.

"Pardon, Monsieur, it was only to be certain that Monsieur is safely in his room."

"Quite safe," said I, cheerfully. "I shall be going to bed in a few minutes."

"Good-night, and sleep well, Monsieur d'Auros."

"Thank you. God go with you!"

We listened to the soldier's retreating tread. Then I looked deep into her grey eyes where tears still trembled, and saw a veiled glimmer there which silenced me. The next instant she was out of my arms and backed up flat against the wall, breathless, defiant, a kind of frightened smile on her lips.

"What hour is it—Richard?" she asked.

"Once," said I, "Count Frontenac said that as soon as you got what you wanted you no longer wanted it. Do you remember, Jeanne?"

"Yes."

I went to the window and looked at my watch in the moonlight. She did not stir.

"I think you had better go," said I, "it is after eleven."

The bed sheet lay on the floor. I picked it up, took scissors and nicked the edge, and tore it into strips. These I braided together. Then I drew the other sheet from my bed and

treated it likewise. Joined, the end of dangling rope coiled on the grass below.

Jeanne, watching me in silence, had never stirred from the wall. I went to her and fastened the rope under her arms in a running noose.

While I was adjusting it she said: "Shall I come to you again?"

"No," said I, "because I do not intend to remain here."

"Are you going to escape?"

"I am going to the woods."

"Richard! It will ruin you with Denonville!"

"Perhaps. But somebody ought to take the Iroquois trail."

"*You!*"

"I do not know that Denonville has troubled himself to send anybody else."

"Why do you wish to go?" she asked in a scared voice.

"Unless somebody goes and discovers what the Iroquois are about, there is like to be a disagreeable business along this river before snow flies."

She did not move, so I took her hand and led her to the window, and showed her how to seat herself on the ledge, and turn and grasp the sill.

When she was seated, and I ready with my knee well braced, she turned partly around and stretched her head backward toward me.

"I shall pray for you—Dick. Kiss me—the way I asked you—once—"

Long—oh, long, deep, exquisite the embrace of our joined lips. Once I lifted my head to look down at her, and saw her lashes wet with tears, and her quivering lips parting—

"Goodbye, darling Jeanne."

"Goodbye. . . . I have waited so long—ever since I was a child. . . . If you will come back we will love innocently

and offend nobody. . . . Oh, Dick, kneel here beside me and pray!"

And, when I had kneeled down beside her, she joined her slender perfumed hands and prayed:

"Mother of Sorrow, Thou knowest how sinfully I love. Nevertheless, Mary inviolate, we two lovers promise never to dishonour thee in adultery. Protect him on the Iroquois trail! Intercede for him, Holy Virgin! Turn aside their arrows! Lead him safely--"

Her head fell back upon my shoulder and the moonlight flooded her white face streaming with tears.

Presently she lifted her head and sat up on the window ledge.

"Well," she said, "we have done all we could do concerning this business of loving each other. It would be a fearful thing to try to deceive the Mother of God. I shall burn a great many candles in the cathedral. . . . We will not kiss very often when you return. . . . Only when it becomes absolutely necessary."

She turned her face to mine and our lips joined and melted together. At last she leaned away from me; drew a hesitating hand across her eyes, peered down at the moonlit grass below.

I said: "Are you ready, darling?"

She nodded, turned, took hold of the window ledge and, with a lithe movement, let herself down till the rope tightened and she swung free.

Inch by inch I lowered her until she stood on the ground below me.

"Dick!"

"Yes?"

"Goodbye, my beloved!" she whispered.

I watched her moving swiftly through the shadow of the wall until she had disappeared in darkness.

At twelve o'clock, midnight, as I was looking at my

watch, a horseman trotted up beneath my window, stretched his legs in the stirrups, yawned, patted his horse, turned and glanced up at the moon.

Presently he began to sing to himself "Lanturlu et lanturlu!" in a gay but modulated voice:

*"—Love me, the night is long!
So is your song, said she;
Love me, I'll do no wrong;
Neither will I, said she.
Love me, I'm young and strong,
Passionate, bold and free!
Love me, and hear my song!
But all she said was Fiddle-de-dee!
Fiddle-de-dee,
Fiddle-de-dee,
All she said was Fiddle-de-dee!"*

Chapter XXXV

ALL the next day I was busy with preparations to escape as soon as it grew dark.

As the horseman would not arrive under my window until midnight, I had all the time in the world to find a canoe and paddle into safety before morning brought the soldier in my house to my bedroom door.

My preparations were simple. When Josephine brought my morning chocolate and tartine I whispered to her my instructions; and, at midday, she smuggled into my chamber provisions for my journey.

My shoulder-pack, which I kept always ready, contained powder, bullets, buckskin scraps for wadding, flints, tinder, a flask of priming-powder, pack thread, needles, a fish line and hooks, spare woolen hose and shirts, a razor, soap, gun-oil, spare moccasins, a fine blue woolen blanket, and a small brass kettle. To these I added, now, a fitch of bacon, salt, and a bag of parched Indian corn, pounded, and mixed with maple sugar.

When my pack was rolled and strapped it was not heavy. I laid it on my bed and placed beside it my gun, my war-belt with beaded sheath for knife and hatchet, my wallet. Next to these I spread out my new hunting shirt, thigh moccasins, ankle-moccasins, and cap made of a black beaver.

Over all these I spread a bed-quilt.

About five o'clock Josephine fetched a copper of hot water. I bathed and dressed me in my forest dress; and Josephine trimmed my hair in her own fashion, which was to place upon my head a round beechen bowl and snip every lock which it did not cover.

My God!—I resembled some of those children one sees in Holland!

Poor Josephine! She did not wish me to go. She feared that Monsieur de Champigny would catch me and hang me from Diamond Rock.

Well, I made her dry her eyes, gave her all the money I had, and bade her have a care to do no blubbing in the kitchen.

By six o'clock I had become very impatient. Daylight lasts long in July.

To pass the time I made over the rope of linen which I had made to lower Jeanne Hérouard with.

I cut the strips very fine and braided them close; and soon had a soft, limber cord with a soaped noose that ran smoothly, and which I intended to loop over a pot-hook under the sill where once hung a wicker bird-cage.

About seven o'clock Josephine fetched my supper. It was cleared away before eight. The soldier came knocking to see that I was still in my room. I bade him good-night and sat down by the window to watch the lemon-tinted light fading over the western forests.

As I was sitting there something flew into the window and hit me. I looked out and saw a young woman hurrying away along the garden wall toward the Cap Rouge highway. I did not recognize her. She began to run and soon was out of view.

Looking about to discover what missile had hit me, I picked up a hard green apple.

Around the stem was a square incision. The stem came out like a plug; the apple was hollow; and inside I found a wad of paper closely scribbled:

RICHARD,

Count Grignon has suddenly returned! Instead of con-

tinuing on to Three Rivers he sneaked back all alone to see what I might be about.

He has discovered that I altered his order concerning the horseman under your window. He was wild with rage. I never saw such fury. He rushed hither and thither emitting loud cries. He ran to the Intendant's Palace, but Champigny, with his company of horse, had ridden to Beauport to chase some brandy smugglers. There was not a horseman left on the St. Charles!

When Grignon returned to the Château he cursed and swore at me, and would have laid violent hands on me, I think, if he had dared.

He accused me of having arranged for your escape, and he promised he himself would see to it that you remained properly guarded until Champigny's trooper could arrive at midnight.

Which is why I am sending you this warning by my faithful maid, Marianne.

Because I am very sure that tonight Count Grignon will gallop to Auros and mount guard there himself until the Intendant's horseman relieves him. Alas, so implacable is his hatred for you, my poor friend, whom, he assures me, he will send to France by the next ship!

If you still think you ought to have escaped, you should have done so last night. But perhaps you do not entirely regret those last and sacred moments you spent with me.

I remained on my knees, last night, praying for you until I fell asleep; and woke up so stiff and chilled that I could scarcely move my legs to creep into bed.

All I can pray for now is that Count Frontenac will arrive before they send you back to France.

Go with God, darling,

Thy mistress,
JEANNE.

Chapter XXXVI

IBURNT this letter in my candle flame and cast the ashes out of the window. They floated up into the after-glow.

A violet and crimson haze began to shroud the forest; dusk already brooded over field and orchard close; night-hawks flapped and dipped and soared, and the chickens already roosted in the trees.

I had not the remotest idea of postponing my flight. I was debating with myself whether to slide down my rope now and exchange shots with the soldier whom I could see at the kitchen door with loaded musket, or, if Grignon rode up, whether to shoot him out of his saddle and run for the river.

Neither of these plans suited me because I did not know what they had done to my canoe and I needed time to find it or another.

While I was considering the matter I heard a horse coming and peeped out.

It was Grignon!

He rode in at a canter from the Cap Rouge road, cast an upward glance at my open window as he passed under it, and pulled up his horse at the kitchen door.

Out came the sentry to salute him. They conversed in guarded tones; I could scarcely hear their voices at all; scarcely see them, now, so dark had it grown.

When, at length, Count Grignon turned his horse toward my window, I saw the soldier re-enter the house; and presently heard his measured tread on the landing. But he did not knock; he merely continued to pace the hall outside my bolted door.

Very cautiously I looked down at Grignon. He sat his horse directly under my window. The horse stirred, now and then, but he never moved in the folds of his black riding cloak.

I scarcely know how the idea came into my head to snare him like a rabbit with a loop.

My rope with its smoothly running noose was already in my hand. I don't know why but it seemed so ludicrous, so ridiculous, to snare him and jerk him into the air that I could scarcely control a violent inclination to laugh.

Watching him, I measured his small, gilded, three-cornered hat with my eye, and widened my noose to accommodate it.

Gently, without a sound, I lowered my noose, intent as a fisherman snaring his prey,—lower—lower, until it hung exactly over his hat.

With a sudden, noiseless motion I dropped it over his head and jerked it; and, my God! I had him fast by the neck.

Instantly, with every atom of strength in arms and legs and loins and back, I jerked him out of his saddle and hauled him up hand over hand.

He could make no noise with his mouth from which his tongue protruded like a panting dog; but his arms and legs were working madly and he kicked and clawed at the side of the house so that I feared the soldier in the hallway would hear him.

However, when I got him up and over the sill he was limp and motionless; and I thought I had done his business for him.

However, when I loosened the noose he gave several gulps and began to pant; and when he was breathing again I stuffed into his mouth the little green apple which had carried Jeanne's message to me, and bound his mouth fast with a woolen scarf.

Now I took from my pack a spare fish line; and with

this I tied his arms behind his back, and made fast his feet; and laid him on my bed.

He now began to roll enormous eyes at me, and seemed frightened.

With my hunting knife I cut a bed blanket into strips and tied him more securely, and, further, lashed him to the bed flat on his back. Then I cut loose the fish line to ease him, and blew out my candle.

Now I was ready to depart. I hoisted the pack and strapped it to my shoulders; hung war-hatchet and knife; wallet, powder-horn and bullet-pouch; slung my gun on my back, put on my cap.

Over the pot-hook I fastened the slipknot of my rope; climbed to the hill and slid down, plump! right onto the saddle of Monsieur Grignon. The well trained cavalry horse had scarcely stirred. Now, feeling an unknown rider, he began to pirouette and wheel and back; but I quieted him and guided him down the path to the river; and, there on the bank behind my fishing station, I discovered my canoe, and both paddles and the pole under it.

First I unsaddled the horse and freed him of his furniture.

"Now, old fellow," said I, "go with God and make a meal of cool, rich English grass!" And I gave him a friendly slap on the rump and watched him canter away across the côte.

Now I ran my canoe to the water's edge; laid in it pack, pole, and paddles; shoved free, swung my stern paddle and drove sturdily au large.

Such a joy of deliverance possessed me that I could scarcely repress the triumphant cry already parting my laughing lips.

The moonlight intoxicated me; a vast freshness from the water swept over me. In my nostrils grew the scent of hemlock, spruce, and pine. Far away I heard the strange

and almost soundless stirring of the wilderness—the vast and ceaseless breathing of giant trees asleep.

Suddenly the crazy laughter of a loon startled the silence. I listened in delight to his goblin mirth and I laughed and shouted back at him across the silver water.

Swinging my paddle with ecstatic power born of new-found freedom, I sang at the top of my voice the song of Shingebis the Diver.

Far on either unseen shore I saw the lights of farms and villages.

When I came to Cap Rouge I steered close inshore where a shanty stood, partly built over the water. A lantern dangled from the dock, and I saw a man there pottering around the little dock.

"Nick!" I shouted, "c'est moi, d'Auros!"

"What! They let you out, then?" he bawled.

"No; I took the key to the fields. Will you join me, Nick?"

"Anywhere! Where?"

"God knows."

"Well, if He knows why should you and I scratch our heads? Wait, then; I pack my bibelots!"

I did not think it prudent to land; I lay off the dock, singing gaily under my breath and awaiting my comrade, Nick o' the Woods.

He appeared after a while; I drove my canoe in; he stepped aboard; threw down his pack and gun; took the bow paddle in his sinewy fist.

"Allons! Au large!" he cried.

"Au large!" I echoed.

The canoe shot out into the dazzling moonlight.

Full-lunged we sang as we drove our paddles:

*"Elle est bonne fille,
Elle est gentille,*

*Elle a les yeux fripons,
Et gai—gai la faridondai!
Et gai la faridondon!—*

But when I thought of Grignon and remembered the little green apple that gagged him I could not sing for laughing.

"What is so funny, then," growled Nick, "that you roll about and are like to upset the canoe?"

"Oh, Nick," said I, "I went a-fishing and caught a King's Commissioner!"

And when I told him he laughed louder than I, and between us it was God's mercy that kept us from capsizing.

"Nick," said I, "what would you do if ever Frontenac came back?"

"Do?" said he. "Well, I'd kiss his hand—which is more than I'd do for the King! And then I'd get drunk."

"Who knows," said I, "but he may be on his way in a tall ship at this very moment to come and govern us again?"

"Did you dream it, Monsieur d'Auros?" demanded the huge fellow, turning his head to look at me.

"Maybe it was a dream. Anyway, an angel told it to me."

"Then it was a dream, of course. Do you believe it will come true?"

"Yes, Nick."

"Well," said he simply, "if you think so it is certain to happen."

He flourished his paddle in the moonlight:

"Vive Frontenac!" he bellowed.

Then, as we paddled up the mighty, moonlit river, we roared out the "Chanson de Frontenac"—every one of its interminable verses. And here are a few done into English:

*Said Frontenac to friend La Salle,
I'm sick and tired of old Laval,
Of Fénelon, and Sieur Perrot,—*

*They misbehave
And plague me so
That every knave
Has got to go!*

*Vive Louis Count of Frontenac!
We pray the King may send you back!*

*Said Frontenac to Grangula,
Go tell your dirty Iroquois
That I'm the great Onontio!
Let every knave
Take his canoe!
Across the wave
They've got to go!*

*Vive Louis Count of Frontenac!
We pray the King may send you back!*

*Said Frontenac, I hate to wait—
I may be late, but sure as fate,
New York shall see me at her gate!
Let England rave—
Our ancient foe—
But every knave
Has got to go!—*

*Vive Louis Count of Frontenac!
We pray the King may send you back!*

*Said Frontenac, if you're a Rat,
Adario, I'll play the Cat
Whose paws have claws; remember that!
If you behave,
Adario,
O'er land and wave
You're free to go.*

Vive Louis Count of Frontenac!

We pray the King may send you back!

I think there are more than three score verses. We sang them all.

It was late July; travel was easy and swift. By day we hid our canoe and slept in the woods; by sundown we started again.

We passed Three Rivers at night and saw the lights of the trading post. In fact, at night, as we ascended the great river, all along the two shores we could see the distant lights in solitary houses and in the tiny hamlets and villages which lined the côtes all the way to Montreal.

It was the first day of August we arrived above Point-au-Trembles and the fortified mill and could see the lights of Montreal beyond.

To renew our provisions we landed near a small dock where were fishing craft and canoes and flat-boats. Also I desired to learn if any news was to be had and whether reports of my treatment of Grignon and of my escape had been carried to Montreal.

Nick wished to go into town, but I bade him remain in the canoe. He submitted, but warned me to caution lest somebody recognize me. However, I now was as sun-burned as any roving forest-runner; and many an Indian wore no darker hue than the mask which sun and wind had painted across my features.

So, without any fear of discovery, I came into St. Peters Street where were many people passing to and fro in the dusk; and where lights glimmered behind shop windows.

I went into a shop and bought bacon, a sack of parched corn pounded, and a bar of maple sugar.

A comely woman served me, bright-eyed, coquettish, quite ready to gossip. When I inquired what news there was she told me that Denonville had arrived with his wife and

daughter and a company of his guards; and that the King's Special Commissioner, Count Grignon-Palladine, and his Countess had also just arrived from Quebec.

This news so astonished and disconcerted me that I did not know what to think. Perhaps my friend Grignon believed me to be so violent a man that I was likely to break into the Récollette convent and steal his wife; and therefore he took her to Montreal with him.

To know that Jeanne Hérouard was here in this same town thrilled and excited me. But I realized I had no time to attempt any communication or even a glimpse of her on the streets.

"Is that the only news, Madame?" I inquired, opening my lean purse.

"That is all," said she, "except that times are hard. Thank God there is peace with the Iroquois devils, and one hears nothing from the heretic English any more."

"And the new Iroquois Embassy?" I inquired; "has it arrived?"

"No; it has not arrived. There is no news whatever from those wild-cats, which cheers all hearts in Montreal."

"Are our scouts out along the Richelieu—do you know?"

"I have not heard so."

"No talk of war, then?"

"None, God be praised. Are you on your way to Fort Frontenac? Wait, then; I wish you good luck!" She took a rose from a cup of water and drew it through the lace of my hunting shirt.

But I had no heart for her coquetry, what with Jeanne always in my mind, and troubled by the silence of the Iroquois.

So did not kiss her, though she seemed to be prepared; and went away to find Nick and tell him what I had learned.

When we were free of the land and headed for the mouth

of the Richelieu, he began to swear, damning Denonville and the Intendant and cursing every Iroquois on earth.

"Hell is where they should den," said he, "and if Count Frontenac were here he'd send them thither and howling. I tell you, Monsieur, they have remained silent too long to leave me tranquil concerning their designs on us."

"Would you not think," said I, "that the Marquis would know enough to send out at least one scout?"

"He seems to have lost all spirit—all common sense," growled Nick. "I do not believe he would even be grateful to us for going, uninvited, on his own and vital business."

"Probably," said I, "he would clap me into the Château prison if he could lay hands on me."

"See to it that he doesn't then," grunted Nick.

About ten o'clock it began to rain. We pulled up our canoe and slept under it.

At sunrise, the sky was clear; and we crawled out to make a little fire and broil some bacon.

There seemed to be no reason why we should not do this; we were not far from the military seigniories that bordered both rivers—almost within sound of parish church bells; and we heard the far discharge of a morning gun from one of the three forts—Roland, probably.

When we had eaten we hid our canoe; for we had no mind to paddle up the principal warpath of the Iroquois, preferring to observe it from the bordering forests.

We had our packs on, and were on the point of starting, when Nick touched my arm, and, looking around, I saw a Montagnais Indian standing very near us in the woods and looking at us.

He had a gun; but, being a Saguenay, I was troubled only by the shock his silent appearance had given me.

He lifted his right hand—not very high—but the palm was outward. I did the same.

"Do you come from Tadousac?" I called to him.

"Eoco!"

"Approach then."

As I spoke, three other Indians appeared like painted spectres. They had not been there; suddenly they were there, appearing silently among the maples.

"Nondante!" said I, coolly, "let us understand one another; noui tsi ietibena,—we are brothers, I suppose."

"Hô! Eoco. Nondante!" they answered.

"Saguenays," said I to Nick; "what are they doing here?"

They came into the little glade of green ferns where we stood beside a spring.

Their faces looked unreal—like the brightly painted paper masks one sees in Paris during carnival. One had coloured his nose a shiny blue; his eyebrows, ears and chin black, the rest scarlet. Another wore a broad ribbon of vermilion paint across his nose and eyes and both cheek-bones. Another's jaws were striped with glistening green and black and yellow bars.

"Ho!" I exclaimed, recognizing one of them, "you have with you old Karihonan, your Sorcerer, I notice."

The old vagabond leered at us and offered his dirty hand.

We greeted them civilly. They had been to visit their Montagnais relatives at Sillery. From there they had gone to Montreal, it appeared, asking employment for scouting purposes; but neither the Governor of the Province nor the Marquis had paid them any attention; and they were loitering along the Richelieu for no particular reason. Seeing signs of a canoe having landed they investigated and discovered us.

"Have you eaten?" I asked.

No Indian admits it if he thinks he can get more.

We gave them bacon and parched corn. They had some trout which they asked leave to broil on the expiring coals of our fire.

These four vagabond Saguenays were Karihonan, a pagan

witch-doctor; and three young men named Cat-Eyes; Naapen, or The Married One; and Sihoun. These were converts.

I said to the latter that his was a Souriquois name, and asked him what he was doing here.

He had killed one of his own nation, he said, had taken refuge with the Saguenays, and now wore their paint.

"My uncle," said I to the feeding Sorcerer, "is there any news of the Iroquois? I have listened and have thought to hear the distant thunder of iron wings."

The Indians were eating their half-cooked fish; but at the dreaded name of Iroquois they ceased instantly and looked up like startled rabbits.

Karihonan asked me if that was our terrible business in the woods—to scout on the Iroquois trail; and when I nodded he promised to make medicine, consult the Isanti Manitou, and discover whether there were any Battle-birds flying over the Richelieu.

The three young Christian Indians regarded him with solemn interest. Like most converts they reconciled their new Christianity with the immemorial paganism of their ancestors.

After he had eaten, and had smoked, the Sorcerer took his turtle-shell rattle and weasel-pelt wallet, and strutted about the sunny glade like a crested wild-cock o' the woods.

While he was marching and stamping and shaking his rattle and weasel-trimmed medicine bag, I tried to persuade the three young men, Cat-Eyes, Naapen and Sihoun, The Brook, to paint for war, shave their heads, oil their bodies, and join us in a war-scout southward where both glory and scalps were quite possible.

Neither glory nor scalps seemed to tempt them, but they offered to go if paid.

The Sorcerer was now squalling and making a tiresome racket with his rattle; but he was a lazy necromancer, and

presently he had enough of it himself, and squatted down on a rock to recover his breath. After several minutes he got up in a dignified manner and rejoined us.

"Have you consulted the Isanti Manitou?" I asked.

He replied that the Wabeno under the ground, hearing him stamping in his witch-dance, had fled. All was good augury. The son of the Moon Witch was friendly and had told him there was not an Iroquois in the forest, and that all remained tranquil in the country of the Five Nations.

Nick gave the old quack some tobacco. But when we picked up our guns and started south, the Montagnais suddenly decided to go with us, and hunt and fish in our company.

But they did not wish to go afoot, and asked us why we did; because, as they pointed out, there could be no Iroquois on the river as long as Karihonan had said there was none.

I advised them, drily, to accompany us afoot; but they got into their canoe—a big one—and paddled away southward after naming a rendezvous that we knew, a day's journey toward Champlain's Lake.

Chapter XXXVII

THERE are war-trails along both banks of the River Richelieu. The principal warpath follows the western shore running almost due north and south. This trail we took.

It was about two feet wide, worn to the depth of a foot or more, and patted as hard as baked clay by the myriad moccasined feet which for centuries had trodden it.

There were places in it which rain had made soft; other stretches crossing brooks or marshy land retained imprints of whatever passed. We found no sign of any moccasin; and nowhere on that solitary river was there a canoe, nor anything floating which had been fashioned by human hands.

We were experienced wood-runners, Nick Perrot and I. No suspicious or unusual sign on land or water was likely to escape our notice. So careful and so wary were we that, once, Nick pointed to several green vine leaves scattered on the trail, healthy and freshly severed; and we could not account for this, and hunted for the reason until, overhead, I discovered a great green caterpillar feeding, and presently saw how it nipped through a leaf-stem, and how the leaf fluttered to the ground.

I believe we noticed everything unusual;—where the ruffled and crested cock-of-the-forest and his mate had scratched a wallow to dust them; where quarrelsome shrew-mice had left their raw earth furrows to shriek and fight together; where a huge bear had reared up on his hind legs to rub and scratch and tusk a tree; where white-splashed ferns and the high nest of sticks above revealed the red hawk's branchier-brood.

And on the water, and under it, our restless eyes noticed the floating lily pad set free by feeding deer or moose; swale grass drifting, reaped by muskrats; a half drowned oak twig floating under water with leaves still green, which an insect hidden in the bark had sawed off; the bleaching armour of turtle egg and crayfish—*débris* of some fat raccoon's dinner; feathers of preening water-fowl floating inshore; and a dead trout passing, belly up;—which troubled us until I discovered the deep stab behind its head dealt by halcyon or heron.

Only one thing we were unable to account for, and this concerned us more or less. For I saw, just under water on a sandy beach, something to which leeches were clinging, and which they had sucked white—which was a lump of flesh of some kind, and seemed to have been cut into a square chunk with a knife.

From it Nick scraped the loathsome creatures with his hunting knife; but neither he nor I was certain concerning its nature, but it was a chunk of flesh from some warm-blooded creature.

That made us more cautious than ever, for it seemed like a fragment of meat designed for an Indian's kettle; and, as we travelled southward, we scanned the water with greatest care lest some floating arrow, or paddle, or fish-spear, or any part of an Indian's apparel should be carried on the current from below.

We travelled so cautiously that at sundown we were still distant from the rendezvous designated by our Montagnais acquaintances.

On account of seeing that leech-covered fragment of flesh in the water we did not build a fire but ate a handful of pounded corn and maple sugar for our supper, seated on a pile of driftwood at the river's edge.

When I finished I went to wash the sticky mess from my hands, and, as I stooped, I saw, in an eddy where the cur-

rent returned upon itself, a moccasin afloat and slowly drifting 'round and 'round in the red beams of the setting sun. It was an ankle-moccasin of deerskin, sodden, but buoyant enough to float; and I drew it into the backwater and examined it.

Nick also came down to see what I had found.

It was a man's moccasin, with triangular flaps, sewed with sinew, embroidered in scarlet and white beadwork, and set with a simple design in porcupine quills which had been dyed purple. The moccasin had not been worn very long.

A brief examination was enough for us, and by a common instinct we stepped back into the shelter of the woods to consider the matter.

"Iroquois," said Nick in a low voice.

"Certainly. Cayuga, too, I think."

"Seneca or Cayuga," growled Nick. "Dropped from a canoe. There is a war party out; no doubt of it."

"No doubt."

"Who knows how many? Ah—" he spat, scowled at the moccasin,—*"the dirty panthers,"* he added fiercely, *"—does the Marquis think to tame them by calling, 'Minoose—minoose—minoose!'"*

How far this moccasin had floated we could only surmise. How many were in the war party we could not pretend to guess. Maybe only three or four young men burning for glory, traveling hundreds of miles in hope of securing their first scalp from man, woman or child—it made no difference in the value of the trophy.

With patient, inextinguishable ferocity they would hang for days and weeks around lonely farm or straggling settlement until some wretched human creature toiling in the stump-fields, or drying home a gaunt cow, or drawing water from some spring at sundown, relaxed for an instant his vigilance. Then, instantly, the end of the world!—a hatchet crashing through skull-bone—a gun-flash from standing corn

—a knife at the very doorsill—and the bloody cap of hair would be ripped free of the skull; while the sunset dusk rang with the demoniac scalp-yell.

We made our night-nest on top of some moist rocks where juniper grew thick,—a hundred yards to the west of the war-trail. Here we slept and watched by turns. The silence had become deathly; not even the usual stirring of little unseen creatures broke the awful quiet of the forest; not a ripple from the river, nor the far splash of rising fish. It was like that intense midsummer stillness which breeds distant lightning.

At dawn I went down to the shore through the river-mist to listen. All around loomed a whitish fog, not yet rising. There was scarcely a chirp and twitter of birds—they being in their moulting fever—nor did I hear a single deer wading shoreward, nor even the yelping bark of a bittern.

There is a happy silence in the woods, born of tranquillity under God, and contentment in His majestic and gentle purpose.

There is another and restless stillness in the forest, born of indefinable apprehension and the creeping instinct of insecurity. Through leagues of wilderness, in infinite and viewless depths, *something* broods, watches; and sky and earth and water seemed vaguely tainted with the breath of evil.

When finally we took the trail we spoke scarcely at all, and then only in whispers.

I say we took the trail—but not the trodden warpath; we dared not—but kept it in view and threaded our furtive way along the wooded bank above where, under an unbroken roof of enormous pines, no underbrush grew through the elastic carpet of brown needles.

We saw nothing—absolutely nothing—no sign, no mark, no slightest trace of man.

Toward five o'clock in the afternoon Nick, who was some distance ahead, stopped. When I came up to him his nose was in the wind. The faintest scent of smoke came to my nostrils.

"Our Montagnais are at the rendezvous," I said, sniffing.

"Perhaps."

As we advanced with every caution the acrid smell of smoke grew stronger. With it came a thicker and unmistakable odour of cooking meat and burned fat.

"They've killed a deer," I said.

"Maybe."

"What else then?"

He shook his head. He had a nose like a hound and could savour with it a multitude of odours where I could distinguish only one.

There was a slope set with giant oaks; and below, not far from the river, a spring bubbled up out of blackish sand which was ever boiling up, stirring and drifting from the bottom of the basin. A grove of sturdy young white ash trees grew around the spring where, through ferns and grasses, a rivulet ran for a few rods to the river.

We could see smoke coming from this place which was our rendezvous; a rank haze, foul with fat, filled the woods. Through it, indistinctly, I could see the little glade, now; and instantly realized that something was wrong; for there were the smoking ashes of four fires instead of one, and these separate fires were builded at the base of trees.

A gentle breeze from the river stirred the greasy smoke and blew it aside, and I saw a man bound to an ash tree, his body sagging forward, his head hanging, raw and bloody.

I felt the hair stirring under my cap; Nick clutched my arm. After a while we ventured to creep nearer; and what

I saw so sickened me that I was like to vomit in the strangling smoke.

To four ash trees were tied the carcasses of what had been four men. All had been tortured and scalped.

The old witch-doctor's belly had been opened and his medicine bag and rattle stuffed into the bloody cavity. His body had been burnt to a crisp to the thighs.

As for the three young Montagnais, such nameless horrors had been practiced upon their half-burned bodies that we could not tell one of them from the others.

In derision for their religion a cross had been hacked on the trees above each convert's head; and we could see that these Iroquois fiends had done to them what they often did to convert-prisoners, that is, melt bullets and pour the molten lead over the scalped heads in mockery of the holy ceremony of baptism.

Great gouts of flesh had been cut from their thighs. Their arms had been skinned alive; and their eyes, tongues, and entrails had been removed and piled together in the spring which was now but a bubbling basin of blood and filth.

But what filled us more with fear than with horror was unmistakable evidence that many people had been concerned in this hellish affair.

Not only in the trampled glade, but all around the woods and on the sandy river shore the ground had been trodden and marked by the imprints of scores of Iroquois moccasins; and everywhere along the water's edge were indications that many canoes had been beached there, and again launched.

Had these canoes passed us down stream, moving soundlessly through the foggy night? The stealthy Iroquois could navigate without a sound—without a ripple.

Or had this large and formidable war party gone the other way?

We stared at the flowing river; we crept for nearly a

mile down stream along the shore, but found no sign to answer our fearful question. Two things were plain; the Iroquois were afoot; and we had no further business in these woods.

Indeed, it was now instantly necessary to travel our back trail as swiftly as might be, get into our canoe, give the alarm along the southern settlements, gain Montreal, and carry our terrible news to Denonville.

But if these canoes were below us it behooved us to move with every possible caution lest these silent goblins of the woods detect our presence and deal with us as they had dealt with these poor creatures hanging from their living stakes of ash.

The forest had grown somewhat dusky; the last ray of sun faded on the river; a melancholy light fell over shore and water and woods. Everything was growing darker among the trees when we started on our back trail through a strange and gathering obscurity.

The taint of that nauseating smoke still lingered in my throat and nostrils; the horror of that glade burned its dreadful imprint upon my brain.

At noon I could not eat a mouthful and followed Nick in silence as he strode on eating parched corn from the palm of his hand.

My one thought and paramount purpose was to get to our canoe, warn the côte, and carry the news to Montreal before another day dawned. Unless the Iroquois had passed us in the night, we could do this.

But about six o'clock, crawling forward along a ridge of rocks set with witch-hopple and witch-hazel, I caught a pale glimpse of the water; and saw upon it three canoes.

"My God," whispered Nick, "there they are."

The canoes remained almost stationary as though en vedette, or were slowly paddled to and fro across the river at right angles to the banks as though guarding and patrolling

the distant river-mouth where it opened into the St. Lawrence.

Suddenly I caught sight of an Indian directly ahead of us among the trees and very near to where we lay. A shaft of sickly light from the sky over the river revealed his glistening paint. He stood so near us that I could make out his every feature. Except for a short breadth of beaded buckskin at his waist, and a pair of ankle-moccasins, he was naked. On a shaven head a short, braided scalp-lock hung above his left ear. From it dangled a broad, white feather tipped with black.

His face was newly and thickly coated with brilliant scarlet paint, except for nose and eyes which were broadly barred with glistening white.

Limbs, body and legs were painted in alternate stripes of scarlet and white.

Knife and war-axe swung at his beaded girdle. Cords holding powder-horn and bullet pouch crossed his chest. He wore a scarlet blanket over his left shoulder and he held a gun cradled in the hollow of his left arm.

So motionless he stood that, except for the brilliant shining paint on him we might not have noticed him at all among the trees.

"Seneca," I whispered in Nick's ear where we lay flat under the witch-bushes.

"Look," motioned Nick with his lips, "—their sentinels are everywhere in front of us!"

I saw them, now—tall, still, painted forms upright on every hillock. Their line stretched away to the river bank eastward and westward as far as we could discern in the ghastly forest light.

There was no movement, no sound from these painted spectres; the three canoes glided like phantoms to and fro across the pallid river; beyond, all around, everywhere on land and water a frightful stillness.

To traverse that line of watching sentinels and reach our canoe was impossible at present.

I whispered in Nick's ear: "We must attempt it sometime tonight."

"Yes, God help us."

Not stirring, scarcely breathing, we lay there among the witch-bushes in darkening woods while the thin river-fog grew denser and spread among the trees. I could scarcely see the Seneca sentry ahead of us, now; and, presently, was unable to see him at all. It was disheartening to know that the forest ahead was alive with these listening demons; and that, to reach our canoe and cross to Montreal, we must contrive to creep unheard and unnoticed through their line—which, at present, seemed utterly impossible.

Once, very far away, I thought I heard thunder. Nick thought he heard it, too. We waited, listening, hoping for a storm which would aid us in our desperate purpose of penetrating the Iroquois line.

After a long time, through the intense stillness a far sound grew in the forest—a rumour, monotonous, strange, sustained.

"Wind," whispered Nick.

Something hit the dead leaves beside me, sharply; other unseen objects fell with a sound like acorns dropping on the forest floor. Something struck me, bounced off, rolled onto the leaves. It was a hail stone.

And now our ears were filling with the flowing roar of a tempest. Hail came faster, thicker, rattling about us; tops of giant pines were in violent motion; the storm shrilled and roared around us tearing through gale-swept trees.

I pulled Nick by the arm and we got blindly to our feet in the screaming darkness. Keeping hold of his sleeve I stumbled forward beside him.

Excepting young Greysolon and his father, the *Sieur Duluth*, Nick was a forest-runner without compare; and I

never knew any Indian except Adario the Rat who was better.

I did not believe we ever could crawl through the Iroquois; or, if we did, I had no hope of finding our canoe in the pitch darkness and raging hail.

Where we were going I had no slightest idea. I neither saw nor heard an Indian. Like blinded creatures we crept and crawled and felt our way with feet and arms outstretched, on, on, until the thickening sting of the icy pellets told me we were in the open somewhere, moving among low willows over sand slippery with fallen hail.

When Nick laid his hand on our canoe I could not believe it until I had felt of it.

We turned it over, laid in it packs, setting poles, and guns, and covered them with our blankets; took both paddles, hoisted the canoe and staggered to the shore.

As we set the birchen craft in the water, close to us, through the stormy night, another canoe loomed up and flew past us; another came darting out of darkness; another, another, swarms of ghostly craft all rushing like evil shadows out of the tempest, and lost instantly in the hail-swept gloom. The blurred forms that propelled them were unrecognizable.

Nick's hoarse whisper was in my ear: "The Iroquois think we belong to their party—if they have seen us at all. Shall we launch and swing au large?"

"Yes," I said.

"Keep the shore," he whispered. "Look at the canoes! The river's full of them. They pass like wild duck in a gale. I tell you the whole Five Nations are here! Where are they going, this flight of murder-birds, through such a storm?"

"Lie shoreward under the first overhanging tree," said I, "and we will let them drive by us the better to follow."

"Look," murmured Nick, "we are at the river's mouth, and their canoes rush westward!"

Straight out into the St. Lawrence, through the driving hail, sped the Iroquois canoes, and we paddling hard on their south-shoreward flank. We could see only a few of their craft at a time but there seemed to be myriads of them stemming the hail-lashed current.

After a long while Nick's hoarse whisper reached my ears and I leaned back to hear him.

"They are heading for Lake St. Louis," he said. "We are in it, now; I can tell by the water. Do you believe they are making for La Chine?"

"If they are, God help the villages. We can't do anything."

"Look at them," whispered Nick, "heading out across the bay in such a tempest!"

"That's why they're choosing such a night," said I; and I cursed them and, kneeling and driving my bow-paddle, I prayed to the Blessed Mother for the poor folk of La Chine. I heard my comrade praying, too.

"Oh, God, Nick," said I, "had we known whither they were headed—"

"We could have done nothing," said he; "there were hundreds of canoes ahead of us. . . . If wave and rain and hail do not swamp us, where shall we try to land?"

"Can we do nothing at La Chine?"

"Nothing. But there are ten miles of settlements and the three forts. Those poor people can't get to Montreal, but maybe we can help some of them to the forts."

The three fortifications were Fort Rémy, Fort Roland, and La Présentation. There should be a few regulars garrisoning these.

Out across the tempest we drove—not alone at first, for at least a score of canoes passed us making directly for La Chine.

Where the seigniory lay I could not tell. Had there been any lights on shore we could not have seen them.

Montreal lay nine miles to the east. There were few regular troops there; nearly all were at Quebec.

Nick said in a distinct voice:

"We are near land. I smell it."

"Where?"

"I think we are near Rose-bank Farm—Hershel's. I think I smell sweet-brier—"

As he spoke we drove on sand, and I sprang to the shore and drew the canoe to the beach which was ankle-deep in hail stones.

Nick waded ashore and clutched my arm: "Look yonder!" he said, turning me around.

In the direction of La Chine I saw a rosy light which grew into a deeper glow and spread.

"They're there!" said Nick.

The glow became a crimson flame; everywhere through driving hail the darkness reddened; fire leaped up in a score of different directions; storm-cloud and water reflected the scarlet conflagration.

Out of the infernal sea of fire came the thin, frightened clamor of church bells—the most tragic appeal I ever have heard.

And now there came a deep booming out of the west—cannon shots from the distant forts.

Not knowing what to do, yet fearfully aware that there was nothing we could accomplish, we began to run toward the villages on fire.

From little whitewashed stone houses which we passed, people already were fleeing. To these we shouted that the Iroquois had landed at La Chine, and warned them not to attempt to save anything but to make their way to Montreal.

At a little chapel a parish priest and a few peasants stood with guns in their hands, looking at the fires.

"Father!" I shouted, "you must leave your altar and get your people to Montreal. The Iroquois are landing at La

Chine in hundreds!" But it was evident they meant to defend their church in which I saw candles burning and women and children running hither and thither carrying benches to barricade the door.

Now, as we traversed a pasture from which a young girl was trying to drive a cow, we came to a fenced field where were haystacks; and from which we could look across to a burning village less than half a mile away.

So near was it that we could hear the crackling of burning wood and the windy roar of flames, and could see very plainly for more than a mile westward along the river shore.

"Mother of Sorrows!" gasped Nick, "look at the Iroquois!"

In the crimson glare the whole country swarmed with savages; the very surface of the ground seemed to be heaving and moving like an ant hill. They were there not in scores or hundreds but in thousands—rushing through blazing streets, capering around burning houses and barns, chasing frightened horses and bellowing cattle which ran heavily along the La Chine road.

There was a brook below us where, in the tiny valley, a dozen houses were afire.

Half a thousand naked, painted devils were tearing everything to pieces there; and, above their goblin yelping, we could hear the awful screaming of women and children, gunshots, the screech of mutilated horses, the infernal roar of flames. Banners of fire streamed from the church steeple which fell, carrying the clanging bell.

Everywhere butchery and conflagration were spreading northward and north-eastward, in the direction of Montreal. Not far away we saw white-coated regular soldiers around a burning blockhouse, engulfed in the rush of savages and massacred before they could resist. Half a hundred yelling Cayugas, so near that we could see their paint, were running along the field at the base of our little hill and setting fire to the haystacks.

"We shall be cut off," whispered Nick; "best move while we may."

"Yes," said I, "we can never reach the forts."

We turned and ran along a brush hedge toward a sugar-bush. The lurid light cast our shadows like the sun and we followed as they fled before us across a fallow upland, through acres of brake and fern and blueberry to the border of the sheltering woods.

I did not suppose we had been seen. Breathing heavily, tremulous, unsteady, mute under the thick spell of horror, we halted just within the woods' edge and cleansed our pans and primed with bright dry powder. And, to be on the safe side, I had just set a newly picked flint, when I saw a dark, naked shape rise from the ground behind Nick; and I fired at him almost before I realized what he was.

Instantly a rush of shadowy figures enveloped us, lighted up for a second by the red flash of Nick's rifle.

In that brief glimpse I freed and swung my war-axe, shearing away half the face of a Seneca warrior who had caught hold of my gun. He tumbled backward against a naked savage behind him whose levelled gun exploded and blew the fur cap from my head. With all my strength I hurled my hatchet at his head, and heard a splashing crash like a rotten eggshell.

Not a cry, not a word had been uttered; but now I heard a grunting and gulping and scuffling among the trees where Nick was scalping a badly wounded Seneca, wrestling with him as with a crippled buck, and finally drove his knife in under the ear to quiet him.

"Two others ran," panted Nick, stooping to take the dying man's shoulders between his knees. Holding him so, he traced swiftly the shape of the trophy with his knife point, twisted his fist into the scalp-lock and ripped it from the skull.

"They'll bring back a hundred of their fellow devils," said I. "Let us go."

But he had lost command of himself; growling, cursing, he strode about kicking the bushes and searching for the other dead men;—and he found and scalped them all, still muttering and swearing.

He slapped the bloody scalps against a tree, spat on them, tied them at his girdle, talking all the while about two children he had seen murdered when the savages butchered the soldiers:

"They bent their little heads back and cut their throats as men butcher pigs," he said. "I heard them shrieking—"

"Have done," said I, "or we are done with this world!" But I could scarce drag him from the place until, emerging from the wood, we saw the whole côte afire between us and Montreal.

"Well—well, by God," he stammered, "what is to be done now!"

I did not know. We stared at the miles of burning houses. The storm had ceased; through clotted clouds a few stars glimmered; a lurid light shone over land and water.

"They are safe in Montreal, at least," I said, thinking of Jeanne Hérouard.

As I spoke we saw two men come slowly into the woods. They seemed exhausted.

"Soldiers," said Nick, "you can make out their white coats."

I called to them. They halted, and we came up with them. They were exhausted and dazed. They belonged to the garrison at Fort Rémy; had been surprised by the savages in a tavern; had somehow escaped the slaughter but were cut off from the fort. They were sergeants of infantry but did not carry even their sidearms.

"Monsieur," said the older man whose face was striped with blood from a cut over his left ear, "there are scores of

taverns along the côte where many of our men must have been surprised without arms and murdered.

"They are killing everybody in La Chine Seigniory—women, children, babies in cradles. Those who could not escape died fighting. When we lay hid in the reeds of a little pond we saw them nail a priest to the side of a burning house in mockery of Jesus, and pierce his side with fish-spears—"

He reeled as he spoke and leaned against a tree. His companion said in a dull voice:

"I have a young wife in Fort Rémy. God knows whether it can hold out."

"It ought to," said I, "if there is a garrison."

"Eighty men of our regiment, Monsieur, and six cavalrymen of the Royal Commissioner—"

"Whose?" I interrupted, startled.

"Monsieur the Count de Grignon-Palladine's guards—"

"What are they doing there?" I demanded incredulously.

"He himself is there—the Commissioner—"

"What is that you tell me!" I cried.

"He came last night with Madame his wife to sup with the officers."

"Count Grignon's *wife*!" I repeated hoarsely.

"Yes, sir, she is there—unless they all have been murdered—" He sat down on a fallen log and hid his face in his trembling hands.

I said to Nick: "I am going to Fort Rémy. I do not ask you to go with me."

"We can't reach it." He shrugged: "All the same, let us go to Fort Rémy."

The wounded soldier said: "The battalion of Subercase is in camp only three miles from La Chine. We are trying to reach it. But he has only two hundred men."

"Tell him to do what he can for Fort Rémy," said I, "and may God accompany you."

Chapter XXXVIII

A TERRIBLE fear concerning Jeanne Hérouard possessed me, banishing the weariness of a sleepless night and of that swift combat in the maple wood.

I was spattered with blood and mud and wet to the skin from wave and storm, but felt only the fever of a frightful anxiety.

Long before we came within sight of Fort Rémy we heard the yelling and hallooing of the savages and the loud noise of their musketry.

Dawn was breaking when we crawled to the edge of the forest and saw beyond us the melancholy stockade of Fort Rémy. No flag flew above it. From the log bastions muskets flashed at intervals, and the reports came distinctly to our ears.

I saw immediately that no human being could live to reach the fort.

Fort Rémy stood in roughly cleared land set thickly with charred stumps of trees around which weeds grew in high, thick tangles.

Behind every stump, in every weed patch, lay a naked savage ablaze with gaudy war-paint, firing leisurely at the stockade. Beyond, and not within our view, amid stumps and bushes, and the débris of burnt timber, rose Fort Roland, but it was far away out of gunshot; and only by the distant explosions of its light cannon were we aware that it had been invested and was in action.

As we crouched there in the edge of the woods, our despairing eyes told us that there was no hope of reaching the fort. There must have been a thousand savages

swarming among the weeds and stumps around it; and their demoniac yelling and the continual discharge of their pieces made a horrid and deafening sound dominated only, at intervals, by the heavy detonations from the distant Roland.

A vast cloud of smoke hung above the fields, through which the rising sun was now flashing over storm-drenched verdure and sparkling water.

It became plain to us both that we could not remain where we were undetected, for, here and yonder, savages were leaving their cover and creeping away toward the fringing forest.

It was agony for me to leave; agony to look at that wretched little fort where was Jeanne Hérouard and only eighty men to confront the horrible hordes that surrounded it.

By the distant cannonshots from Roland I knew we could not hope to gain that fortification, either.

"I know not what to do," said I, "unless we seek the camp of Subercase."

I could scarcely speak at all, and tears were in my eyes and hot on my face.

"Do you know where Subercase camps?" I asked.

He said he did, and added that we had better be moving. So we turned away wearily and I stumbled off through the forest once more, half blinded with tears.

How we avoided the savages I don't know, because they were loitering everywhere in the clearings, prowling around ruined cabins; and we saw the half-burnt corpses of butchered women and children still tied to the stakes where they had agonized in fire the night before.

Nick caught a drunken Seneca in the woods and cut his throat and scalped him—a revolting sight—for the fiend had a dead baby by the leg and was dashing the poor little body against the trees.

We caught him and we saw and chased another—a Cayuga—and what beastliness he had been about in the woods I

know not; but he had the freshly bleeding scalp of a white woman in his hand, with thick long yellow hair.

He sprang from the thickets on our left hand and ran like a deer; and we after him; and Nick's hatchet hurled at hazard knocked him flat in the ferns where we beat him to death with war-axe and gun-butt; and it was like killing a tree-cat and a long and filthy business.

After that we came to a solitary burnt cabin and saw two dead women in their night shifts, scalped, and lying in the standing corn.

There were Indians on the other side of the cornfield; we heard them shouting to one another and saw fat cattle running.

This warned us aside and we were obliged to take to the forest again where Nick missed his direction and we got into a vast swamp of tamarack and quicksand where we nearly drowned before we got through.

Beyond, we saw a gleam of sunlight and knew the woods' edge lay near. As we came to it we saw a man in the white uniform of a regular, and shouted to him; and he shouted back that the battalion camp lay just ahead and that the men were in line and under arms.

In a few moments we caught sight of them. There were scarcely two hundred in a double rank with drummers on their flank and two boyish lieutenants in front, their drawn swords shining in their hands.

As we ran up they looked at us out of haggard eyes and in silence.

To our inquiry the senior subaltern answered that their commander, Subercase, was in Montreal on a visit to the Marquis of Denonville; that they had no orders and did not know what to do.

And it was while we were speaking to this bewildered young man that we heard the gallop of horses on the rutted

road in front of us and saw Subercase, followed by several gendarmes, ride up all in a lather.

In a breathless voice he asked for information. Nobody had any, as nobody had stirred from the ranks since four o'clock that morning.

So I went to him and told him what had happened at La Chine and along the côte, and what was the situation at Rémy and Roland and probably at La Présentation. I told him he had nearly two thousand Iroquois in front of him.

He nodded and drew his sword; "Very well," said he in his quick, energetic voice, "I know what is to be done."

He passed his troops in rapid inspection; ordered the drummers to leave their drums and take muskets and bayonets; then, putting himself at the head of his men, he lifted his sword on high and swung it forward.

"March!" he cried; and rode forward.

Chapter XXXIX

WHEN we came in sight of Fort Roland the garrison shouted a welcome. As Subercase rode up to the fort gates they were flung open; and a few savages slunk away from behind distant stumps and ran for the forest. Subercase, still mounted, shouted for the garrison to join his column; and they came pouring out of the parade, their officers leading, and formed behind the battalion of Subercase which marched immediately toward the forest.

As Subercase rode by I called out to him: "Monsieur, will you relieve Fort Rémy?"

"That is best done by cleansing the woods of them," he replied. "I ask of God only to let me get into the woods beyond La Chine, and I'll do the rest!"

The column moved forward at a quickstep. In an incredibly short time we were in La Chine. Everywhere in the streets and fields we saw dead men, dead women, dead children, still hanging to the stakes where they had been tortured to death. The soldiers, now on the run, turned away their heads so as not to see.

We were quickly at the forest's edge. It was no place for horses. As Subercase dismounted and ran into the woods with drawn sword, an officer galloped up and shouted after him:

"Come back, Monsieur! The Marquis of Denonville has sent me with formal orders absolutely forbidding you to take the risk of entering the forest!"

"What's that?" roared Subercase in astonishment and fury. He turned and came striding out of the woods, pushing his way through the panting ranks of his soldiers:

"Ha! Monsieur de Vaudreuil, what is this nonsense you pretend to tell me on the part of the Governor General?" he demanded hotly.

Vaudreuil turned very red: "I have the honour to carry formal orders—" he began; but Subercase interrupted him violently:

"I will not be talked to and bothered and annoyed at such a moment. I know how to find and punish these Iroquois devils!"

"The Marquis warns you to consider the safety of Montreal and run no risk in the forest!" repeated Vaudreuil. "And, believe me, Monsieur, if you disobey orders you will face a military court and your own ruin and disgrace!"

In a fury Subercase seized his horse and flung himself into his saddle, cursing and raging and shouting to his officers to form the column for retreat.

"It were better," he cried, "for the Governor General to come here with what militia he can muster and help me drive these vagabond Iroquois murderers out of La Chine! This is a shameful and outrageous thing—to stop me at such a moment with threats of a military court and disgrace!"

"I know how to punish the Iroquois if anybody will let me. My God," he cried, spurring his horse in helpless anger and disgust, "the time to strike is *now*! And they order me to sit and suck my thumb!"

At Fort Roland were gathered a hundred or more militia when Subercase and his regulars arrived there. I went to them and begged them to go with me to the relief of Rémy; but Vaudreuil rode up while I was talking to them and sternly told them they were under orders to remain at Roland.

It was evident he did not recognize me because he told me curtly to mind my business and go inside the fort.

I wanted to pull him from his horse and give him a basting

with my ramrod; but that would only do me harm. Besides, I knew he was a brave man and was only doing his duty by executing orders. But the stupidity and irresolution of Denonville surpassed anything I ever had heard of.

Subercase, who did not know me at all, called to me where he stood on the rifle-platform of the east bastion; and I climbed the ladder and went to him.

He asked me if I would take a message to Lieutenant de la Rabeyre, commanding at Fort Rémy; and I said I would try. He wrote a note which I put into my hunting shirt.

It was nearly nightfall, now. I had eaten nothing in nearly thirty-six hours. There was soup for the troops in barracks, and Nick and I had a bowl of it.

As soon as it had become dark we left the fort. Stars glittered with a lustre almost wintry. Almost within gunshot of Roland we were fired on. The enemy swarmed everywhere between us and Fort Rémy. No living soul could hope to get through undetected. We tried their lines in a score of places, and every time we drew their fire and were obliged to make the best speed we could to escape them. Indeed, one combat between a band of Loups and Nick and myself took place so near to Roland that they saw the flashes from the gun-fire from their ramparts where we made a running fight of it from thicket to stump until they drove us to the very gates of Roland, where Subercase had gathered a company of regulars to aid us.

"You can't get through," he said as Nick and I reeled in through the gateway. "I feared it. Never mind," he added kindly; "go and rest a little and let me consider the matter. *La nuit porte conseil!*"

It seemed to me that I had scarcely slept at all when somebody began to shake my arm.

"Get up! Get up!" shouted a sergeant of regulars! "There are a thousand savages attacking Rémy and Monsieur Subercase wants you to go out for news!"

As I seized my gun and staggered out across the parade, still stupid with sleep, Subercase stopped me.

"Monsieur de Vaudreuil refuses to let me go to the relief of Rémy," he said, his voice trembling with anger. "Be good enough to find out for me what is happening there!"

Chapter XL

NICK o' the Woods, yawning and rubbing his eyes, was waiting for me outside the stockade gates. As I joined him I could hear a tremendous roar of musketry beyond the woods.

"They are fighting furiously over yonder," he said sleepily. "Come this way; we can not get anywhere near Rémy through the open country." He offered me a handful of hard bread from the barrack ovens.

"This time," said I, "I am going through or I die for it."

"Are you mad to talk in that manner?" he demanded, munching his bread.

"No; I have my reasons. If the fort falls I share the destiny of the garrison. You had better leave me, Nick."

He began to swear to himself as we hurried along through the woods. We gnawed our crusts as we walked; and Nick, who had some brandy, offered me a little.

Fatigued and miserable and dirty in body, my mind was wearier and sicker with the fever of deathly anxiety concerning Jeanne Hérouard.

If a woman, tenderly loved by her lover, dies by God's desire in her proper bed, a man can comprehend his own wretchedness and grief and attempt to endure it.

But every nerve, every instinct in me writhed under the torture of the terrible fear that had seized me lest Jeanne Hérouard's body should be delivered to the ferocity of the painted hordes that menaced Fort Rémy.

If she must so die, then I prayed I might find some way through to her to help her render up her soul to God, and die beside her.

So, in agony of mind and tormented by gloomy thoughts, I followed Nick, who knew this country better than I because he had been born near Château-Gai—or, as some call it, Châteaugay—across the bay.

Again I admit his woodcraft is superior to my own, for I shall never cease wondering how he got us through that forest swarming alive with Iroquois. And always, on our left hand, we could hear the demon-like yelping and the loud explosions of musketry; but realized now that it was not an assault on the fort and that they were doing only what they had done the day before—that is, firing from weed-patch and charred stump and running like devils among the ruined hamlets near by to plunder and murder and drink themselves drunk on what brandy they might discover.

There is a tongue of woods stretching from the great forest barrier toward the fort; and beyond it were then a few whitewashed stone houses.

Around these houses hundreds of painted savages were howling and capering; and when we crept out along the tongue of woods we discovered that they had found several casks of traders' brandy and were gulping it out of milk bowls and becoming crazed. They had caught a white man there. I hope he was dead, for they impaled him on a pointed stave in front of his own charred doorway; and now were dancing and strutting and stamping around him and beating him with switches while they kept up a rhythmic yelling.

These Indians were Cayugas and Loups, and many of them so drunk they could scarcely stand.

But what occupied our attention was the stretch of open land between us and the fort. For we could not see an Indian in it; and it seemed evident that these drunken devils, finding brandy, had deserted that angle of the fort for a debauch.

There lay our desperate chance. We both saw and understood at once that this long, narrow lane of bushes,

weeds and stumps offered us the only opportunity to gain Fort Rémy which had yet presented itself.

On the edge of the woods, I remember, was a thicket of jewel-weed, and, around the strange, orange-tinted blossoms, humming-birds flashing green and gold and crimson darted and whizzed like jewelled arrows.

Into this patch of weeds I crawled and heard Nick creeping after me. Out of these weeds a kind of ditch made by overflow from some spring led almost as straight as a plowed furrow toward the fort. Patches of mint and cress grew in it and it was full of icy, greenish slime.

On our hands and knees we traversed this ditch, wormed our way through where red-willow or alder grew, and came finally to a great burned stump covered with bittersweet, which straddled the ditch but gave us no room to dive under it.

Nick, who had ventured to raise his head a little, called to me in a guarded voice that the stockade was within a hundred yards of us but there seemed to be no more cover.

"If you can see anybody on the parapet, call to them," I whispered.

After a minute or so he said: "I see a soldier looking over the pickets."

"Ohé, la haut!" he called. "Regardez donc un peu! Ici!"

"Qui vive!" came a sharp voice from in front of us.

"France! Messenger from Fort Roland! Be ready to open your gate to us!"

"How many?"

"Two!"

"Soldiers?"

"Coureurs-de-Bois."

"Bien. You are in time. We are about to make a sortie to Fort Roland. Wait a moment more. Run when the gate opens."

We waited until Nick, glancing back over his shoulder,

saw some crouching figures stealing toward us, darting from bush to stump.

"*Sacré garce!*" he grunted, "it's getting too hot for me. Give them a shot and run for the gate."

We both stood up. A dozen shots and a chorus of fierce howls greeted our appearance; we both fired together, and saw a savage stagger, try to run, and pitch over into the weeds.

Out of the shallow ditch we jumped and ran for the stockade gates.

"Open!" we shouted, striking the great logs with our gun-butts.

The massive gates quivered, slowly opened; I gave Nick a shove and he stumbled through; I followed, and found myself in a court crowded with soldiers and Mission Indians who regarded us with amazement.

"A message for Lieutenant de la Rabeyre," I panted; "where is the officer in command!"

A thin, hollow-eyed young man came forward; I drew the letter, wet with sweat, from the breast of my hunting shirt, and offered it; he read it anxiously, gave me a hopeless look, shrugged his shoulders.

"No," he said, "it is useless to try to hold out if they attack us. I mean to cut my way out at once."

As he spoke I caught sight of Le Moyne de Longueuil and ran up to him:

"Longueuil," I cried, "it is I, Stanhope d'Auros. Do you recognize me?"

He stared at me. "Yes," he said slowly, "I think it is you, d'Auros."

"Is the Countess Palladine in this fort?"

"Yes."

"Longueuil," I begged him, "try to persuade this young man not to order a sortie at this time—" I turned and indicated Rabeyre who already had drawn his sword.

He came to where I stood with Longueuil. "We can't stay here," he said, "if the Iroquois attack us; and my men know it."

"Indians will not attack in open country a stockade as strong as this!" I said.

He would not listen to me or to Longueuil but ran with his sergeants to place his men and to shove the Mission Indians into ranks.

There were, perhaps, fifty regulars, their muskets armed with bayonets; and about thirty Indians painted and armed after their own manner.

"Where is Count Grignon?" I asked.

Longueuil said: "He rides the only horse in the fort; he is in the stables watching the saddling."

"And Madame la Contesse?" I asked, astonished.

"He thinks it safer for her to go afoot surrounded by bayonets and insists he can protect her better if he is mounted."

I looked at Longueuil in amazement, and he gave me an inscrutable glance.

I called to Nick; and when he came up I said to Longueuil: "Let us three men march beside the Countess Palladine. I suppose her husband means to do what is best but I think he must be crazy."

As I spoke I heard the clatter of a horse behind me and saw Grignon ride out of the stables. He had a pistol in his right hand and his naked sword and bridle in his left. He was frightfully pale and when he spoke he stammered and could scarcely utter a word.

He said to Rabeyre that haste was necessary and that the men were to make the sortie on the double.

"Monsieur," said Rabeyre, drily, "I understand the need of haste but I am not going to head a panic-stricken mob!"

I don't know whether Grignon heard him. He seemed to shudder in his saddle, or perhaps it was his nervous horse.

He looked vacantly at everybody—at me, also, but seemed to recognize nobody, least of all, me.

Longueuil said to Rabeyre: “You had better keep your bugler and drummer quiet and get as far out as you can without advertising your intentions.”

As he spoke I caught sight of Jeanne Hérouard. She came from the officers’ quarters across the crowded parade. She was very white, but I saw her smile at the soldiers and say a gay word here and there as she passed.

When she saw her husband she said in a clear, almost mocking voice: “Monsieur, I am here. Where do you wish me to place myself?”

It was Rabeyre who, hat in hand, came up and led her toward the rear-centre of the column, and I heard him instructing her and the soldiers surrounding her.

Then, sword in hand, the lieutenant hurried along the ranks toward the gates which were ready to be flung open by two Mission Indians.

I heard Grignon cry out to him in a high, shrill voice that quavered: “Remember that you are to lose no time! I am his Majesty’s Commissioner and I speak to you with authority! The blood of all here will be on your head if you delay to fight!”

I heard somebody say in a low voice: “The man is crazed with fear. And look yonder at his Countess who is laughing with the grenadiers!”

From the head of the column Rabeyre’s loud young voice was lifted in command; the heavy gates swung open; the torrent of soldiers and Indians poured out into the open ground.

As Jeanne Hérouard passed us, surrounded by grenadiers, Nick, Longueuil, and I closed in around her.

She noticed us and called out a cheery: “*Merci, Messieurs!*” But, though her grey eyes swept me, I knew she did not know me in my mask of mud and sunburn and my dirty buckskins.

Chapter XLI

OUR little column advanced in the form of a wedge, of which regulars formed the point and Indians the base.

All around us a sustained, monotonous yelling of unseen enemy Indians began which grew and swelled to an hysterical roar as we came in sight of Fort Roland.

Suddenly, ahead of us, a thousand savages rose from the bushes; a storm of bullets and arrows swept us; soldiers fell everywhere; the whole column recoiled.

Grignon seemed to have lost his head when the first flight of arrows whistled among us, and he began to shout and scream at Rabeyre to put his men on the double; and his horse, grazed by arrows, became frantic and kicked and reared and backed, trampling the soldiers in every direction.

The grenadier beside Jeanne Hérouard was shot dead and fell against me, knocking me down.

When I got to my feet I saw soldiers and Mission Indians staggering about and falling through the smoke.

Only a few of our soldiers were firing and there was no time to reload because the Iroquois already were swarming among us with their hatchets, jerking the guns from the soldiers' hands, overwhelming regulars and Mission Indians.

In the frightful uproar I caught hold of Grignon's horse: "Take your wife up in front of you and gallop back to Rémy!" I shouted. But he struck at me with his pistol and jerked his bridle free of my grasp:

"Get out of my way!" he screamed, spurring at me to ride me down; and, crouching in his saddle, he burst through the disordered ranks in headlong flight.

Back, out of the horrible *mêlée* in front of us, reeled our soldiers, swinging their blood-wet bayonets, stabbing, clubbing among the yelling hordes that overwhelmed them.

I fired at a ghastly shape in the smoke; Nick jerked me back, crying: "Look out! The Countess has been hurt!"

Jeanne was down in the long grass, her left thigh transfixed by an arrow. Nick got her by one arm, and Longueuil by the other.

She lifted her head and looked at me as I knelt beside her.

"Dick!" she gasped.

"Lift her!" I cried to Nick, "the arrow has gone through!"

Nick and Longueuil dragged her to her feet; I took hold of the feathered end of the arrow and snapped it off; then, seizing the war-head, drew the broken shaft swiftly through her leg and flung it away.

"Start with her for Rémy," I said; "I'll try to keep them off—"

"I don't want to!" she wailed, "I don't want to leave you!—"

Our Mission Indians, fighting like dying wild-cats, were being crowded back upon us. So terrible was their resistance that the Cayugas recoiled from them and turned again on the exhausted group of regulars which still stood facing with bloody bayonets the yelling onset.

Four Mission Indians fought undaunted around me as we retreated through the bushes toward Rémy, which I never again believed I should see.

But the Cayugas were in no hurry to close with them, finding safer employment in the surging and murderous waves overwhelming the regulars where, still facing annihilation, they were perishing under knife and hatchet, man after man.

I called back my Montagnais when a chance came and we turned and ran until compelled to turn again and fight off the stray hornets that attacked us.

Already we were very near Fort Rémy; and I could see Nick and Longueuil carrying Jeanne Hérouard across the stump-field toward the stockade.

Three Seneca wolves, who had been following us, caught sight of them, too, and tried to get at them. My Montagnais noticed this and ran obliquely to the left. I had a near shot at one of the naked fiends. My fire broke his leg, crippling him so that one of my Christian Indians chased and caught him and tore away his scalp while he was still crawling on his hands and knees.

But these bloodhounds never leave a trail, and Nick and Longueuil had to turn at the very gate of the stockade and destroy the other two alive with gun-butt, knife and hatchet.

I saw Jeanne Hérouard limp wearily through the gate, then, leaning against it, look back at us where we were fighting our way toward the stockade.

As we turned for a final dash to safety, ambushed enemies fired upon us and two of my Indians fell dead.

The other two, guns trailing, plodded along beside me. Both had been grazed by arrows and wounded by knives, and were covered with blood and seemed exhausted. Yet both had strength to turn on the pursuing Iroquois and deride them with insulting gestures and whispered insults:

"Cannibals!" they panted, "go cut up your own dead for your Maqua kettles! We have taken their hides off for you!"

I staggered into the stockade; my Indians followed; Nick and Longueuil closed and barred the gates.

Jeanne Hérouard, flushed with fever but composed, was seated on a block of wood outside a sentry box. Her head rested between both hands and she watched my approach, unstirring.

"Do you suffer?" I asked, pressing the hot hands she abandoned to me as I bent over her.

She looked up at me, her eyes still wide with the horror of it all:

"Are—are you badly injured?" she stammered, "—you are all over blood—"

"It is not mine, then." I looked up at the rifle-platform and saw Nick and Longueuil there, with my two Indians and some traders, teamsters, Indian boys and Indian women who had preferred to remain in the fort when the sortie began.

"Nick!" I called, "I take a moment to dress the injury of Madame de Palladine before I join you."

He waved his hand carelessly: "At your leisure, old friend. They seem to have no desire to attack us here."

I bent down beside Jeanne Hérouard: "Place your arms around my neck," I said, "and hold fast." When she had done so I passed one arm under her knees and lifted her.

"Nick!" I shouted; and he turned and looked down.

"Where is the doctor's chest?"

"In the northwest bastion. But nobody's there. He marched with the column."

"Where are your quarters?" I asked Jeanne.

"Across the parade. Yes—this way. . . . Now to the left. . . . Push open that door—no, not *that* one; that is my husband's room—I mean the little door on this side—"

I shoved it open with my foot and entered. The bed was a bunk built into the log wall. The only other furniture was a table and a stool.

As gently as I was able I went to the bed and laid her on the blanket. She unclasped her arms from my neck and sank back.

"A moment only," said I, "and I return." I went out, ran across the parade to the west bastion. On a door, painted in white letters, I saw the word, "Surgeon."

There were a number of bottles, phials, and birchen boxes on the shelves, also retorts and a pestle and mortar. One

earthen jug smelled of brandy. I took this, a basin, a roll of lint, a probe, a syringe, bandages, a phial marked "Fir Balsam," and another labelled "Extract of Hazel and Sumach."

On my way back I noticed a well on the parade. Bucket and rope lay beside it. I called to a little Indian girl who sat all alone on the grass looking at me, and bade her draw a bucket of water and fetch it to the officers' quarters.

The little thing was so swift about it that she was at my heels with the bucket of water as I entered Jeanne's room.

"Set it here," said I, and placed my medicines upon the table.

The child gravely seated herself on the floor, and, as I thought she might be useful, I let her remain.

I was turning toward the bunk where Jeanne lay, when, of a sudden, the doorway darkened and I saw Count Grignon standing there.

He was white as a corpse, and his little eyes stared at me as though striving to reconcile my appearance with a voice he recognized.

"Are you really this infamous Stanhope, then?" he burst out in his shrill, high voice of a fantoche. "Ha! I recognize you, now, assassin!" He pulled a pistol from his belt, fairly screaming at me, "Assassin! Outlaw! I'm going to arrange your affairs for you immediately—"

Before he could cock his pistol I caught his arm and tore it out of his fingers:

"You fool," said I, "your wife lies there wounded. After I do what is necessary for her we shall continue our conversation outside—"

His little red eyes already had discovered Jeanne on the bed; he ran to look at her, turned on me in a frenzy of rage:

"This is my affair!" he shouted. "Don't presume to lay a finger on her! Get out of my wife's bed-chamber! Take yourself off, you murderous heretic—"

But I took him by the neck and body and hurled him headlong into the corridor, and while he was picking himself up I caught his leg in my grasp, dragged him to the outer door and flung him onto the grass. I did not say anything to him. Good breeding forbids vituperation.

I bolted the door and walked back to the bedroom.

First I washed my hands which were filthy. Then, cleansing the basin, I poured in brandy, took a handful of lint, and went to the bed.

"Let me see the wound," I said.

She opened her eyes and gave me a confused look, closed them; made an almost imperceptible motion of acquiescence.

Very gently I exposed the wound, washed away the blood with brandy-soaked lint.

She shrank and caught my arm, then lay quivering as I probed and washed the arrow-wound and dressed it with balsam, sumach and hazel.

How I brought myself to inflict such agony on that delicate, snowy flesh—how I summoned blind courage to accomplish what had to be done—I never shall cease to wonder at.

She did not utter a sound, but tears ran silently from her tightly closed eyes over her white face.

When it was done I said to her: "That the Iroquois arrow was not poisoned is certain, else you had been insensible long since. But the hurt is clean, and all should go well, now."

I caught a whispered thanks for what I had done, then she sighed deeply and lay very silent. But I knew how deep and burning was becoming the anguish of her tender body.

When I had cleansed myself of her blood I fetched her a cup of sweet water and she drank it all.

For a little while, yet, I sat on the bed's edge beside her. She held my hand very tightly and I knew she suffered fearfully.

"I shall not let Count Grignon annoy you," said I.

"Keep him away," she murmured; "I can never again endure him."

A painful colour flooded her features. I knew she was thinking of this man's baseness.

"Have any others returned?" she whispered.

"None ever will, Jeanne."

"Why did they not come to aid us from Fort Roland?"

"They were too few."

"Yet—you came to Fort Rémy all alone, Dick."

"Nick o' the Woods was with me. Also, I had to come; I carried a message to Rabeyre."

"Did you know I was here?"

"Yes."

She pressed my hand, drew it to her and kissed it.

"What extravagance do you commit, Jeanne!" I protested; but she crushed my hand against her breast with both of hers and I saw a smile quiver on her parted lips.

After a little while I told her I must go and that she should lie still so that the arrow-wound would not bleed afresh or become fevered.

Then I called the little Indian girl to me and told her to remain here and summon me if necessary.

There had been no firing from our stockade, so far; but, at such a time, all men belonged on the ramparts. Even Grignon. And I was determined he should go there whatever other ideas he might be meditating.

I bent over and kissed the feverish palms of Jeanne Hérouard's hands; then I went out to the parade and looked around for Grignon. To my astonishment I saw that he had mounted his bleeding horse again and had already ridden to the postern which two Indian traders were now unbarring, evidently at his command.

"What are you about?" I called to him in a rage. "Are you preparing to desert your wife again?"

They had, by this time, withdrawn the bar from the postern and had opened the way outside to him.

"Come back!" I shouted. "If you flee to Montreal you flee in vain, for I shall surely go there and punish you for your cowardice, you treacherous dog!"

He forced his way outside the gate but turned his horse around and yelled at me that he was riding to Montreal for help.

"You liar, you are running away! What do you mean by it, you poltroon?" I cried in a passion as I ran up. "Will you get off that horse and return instantly to this stockade where you know damned well that every man is needed?"

"When Denonville arrives here he'll do your business for you, you dirty wood-running Englishman!" he screamed. "Take *that*—on account!—"

I did not see he had a pistol until he fired at me. The ball seared my cheekbone and the blood drenched me. As I sprang at him he hurled the pistol at me, whirled his horse about, and spurred out into the field.

"You are crazy!" I shouted after him, "you can't reach Montreal alive! Come back, in God's name, you frightened fool! I will not lay a finger on you—"

But he only spurred the harder, lying almost flat on his horse's neck, as though fearing a shot from me, and flew on along the Montreal road.

As far as I could see him, and until he had vanished among the distant trees, he was still riding his horse on a dead run. No puffs of smoke from any ambushed gun marked his frantic course. He had apparently got clear away.

It was a knave's journey; for, long ago, Montreal had heard the cannon at La Chine; and it was plain enough to anybody that, because Denonville had not already come, he had no intention of coming to La Chine, or to Rémy, Roland, or to La Présentation.

I gave a last glance down the Montreal road; and saw,

suddenly, a score of enemy Indians come swiftly into it and gaze in the direction of Montreal. I thought to myself that the devil certainly looks after his own in the New World as well as in the Old.

So I closed and barred the postern and, trailing my gun, wearily, mounted a ladder to the firing platform on the ramparts.

The drenching I got in the storm had given me a heavy cold. I felt quite ill.

Chapter XLII

ON the sixth day after the sortie, the enemy Indians retired from the clearing and settled themselves along the edges of the bordering forest to observe us.

Le Moyne de Longueuil who, properly, had taken command of our little garrison, came up the firing ladder to where I was shivering and standing guard above the postern.

"You seem ill," he said bluntly.

I told him I had taken a slight chill crossing Lake St. Louis in the storm, but that it would pass.

"You look very ill," he repeated. His own visage was haggard with care; he glowered at the woods beyond the cleared land; gazed across the wastes of water under scowling brows.

"An hour ago," he said, "one of our Loup Indians somehow slipped through the Iroquois, gained our main gate, and called up to the Montagnais to let him in. That seems strange, does it not, Stanhope?"

"What kind of Indian is he?"

"He says he is a Loup. And this is the news he brings us; that our poor regulars and converts perished to a man in the sortie. But I had guessed that already."

"Rabeyre had no chance," said I.

"None. There were more than a thousand Iroquois against us. Nor do I blame Vaudreuil for not coming to us from Roland. Do you?"

"It was certain death. . . . Does this strange Loup bring any other news, Longueuil?"

"He says Montreal is frantic with terror. The panic there is awful. He says, also, that the Senecas have taken

a white man within sight of Montreal,—an officer. Do you suppose he means Count Grignon?"

"Did the Loup say he was on horseback?"

"I asked. He didn't know. . . . I wish you would go down and talk to this yellow painted savage who calls himself a friendly Loup."

"Don't you think he is?"

Longueuil shrugged. "Listen; go down and talk to him yourself. And then go and drink some hot brandy and maple sugar, roll yourself in your blanket and lie quiet until you are needed."

I objected, but he was very short with me, speaking in a tone of command.

"Oh," said I, "is it a military order? Because really, every man is needed—"

"I insist. Madame de Palladine has made a fire to heat your tisane; and has some hot stones for your feet."

"She ought not to try to walk!" I said sharply.

"She limps about well enough. Let her limp, then, and render thanks to God; because when I saw that arrow I thought it was poisoned. 'You are a dead Countess,' thinks I, 'and it's too bad that Monsieur your husband was not made the pincushion for that poisoned pin. . . . The dirty coward.'"

He swung his loaded gun to his shoulder and began to walk up and down the platform:

"What a scoundrel," he muttered, "to call himself a gentleman of France! Canaille!"

I descended the ladder and went across the parade to the main gate where the strange Indian stood guarded by two of our Montagnais.

He wore Delaware paint and moccasins and seemed to be what he said he was, a Loup.

"Awaw kinawe—step a little this way," I said to him. "Now tell me what you are doing in this fort?"

"Ki pi mawatisin—I come here to see you," he replied in a nasal voice.

I looked at him suspiciously. Because, in *Algonquin*, the terminal *N* is never nasal. But it is, in *Iroquois*.

"What is your name?" I demanded, coldly.

"The Carcajou."

"Your nation?"

"Loups of the West."

"Your clan?"

"The Owl."

I stared at him: "If there be an Owl clan among the Lenni Lenape," said I, "then I never heard of it."

"There are Owls among the Loups of the West," he replied coolly.

I wanted to hear that telltale *N* again. I said:

"Where do you live?"

"On the Ottawa."

"Where do you come from?"

"En dai an,—from there, where I live."

Ah, there it was again, the significant, nasal *N*!

"Are you a chief?" I asked.

"Yes. Not a Sagamore."

"If you could get here why did not Onontio bring his soldiers and come with you?"

"Onontio ni-naganik,—the Governor refused to come when he saw the forest."

"Oh. What did he say?"

"Ni kanis andi ejiwijian. Ki nipomin!—Mon frère, ou me conduis-tu? We shall perish."

Always the nasal terminal *N* of the Iroquois!

I looked at the poisonous and snake-like yellow rings and bars painted thickly on his broad features and body; at his squat, powerful figure and heavy bow legs; at his gun, hatchet, blanket, moccasins; at his scalp-lock from which sagged three hawk-feathers.

I said in English to our two converts: "Take my friend The Carcajou to the guard house; give him a blanket; feed him; *and lock him in!*"

To the Loup I said: "The Carcajou is tired; a blanket awaits him. He is hungry; food will be fetched. When he has reposed himself sufficiently he shall be properly questioned."

I watched this half-naked, burly, yellow-painted savage as he walked to the guard house between the two lean, wiry Montagnais. If he turned out to be a spy sent in to observe and report upon our condition I meant to hang him from the stockade as an example for his murderous friends to consider and reflect upon.

I toiled up the ladder and told Longueuil what I suspected and what I had done.

"If he's a spy we'll hang him," said he. "Now go and lie down as I ordered you. The eyes in your head resemble a dead man's."

I really felt very ill. I went to the officers' quarters and found the door into Jeanne Hérouard's room open, and saw her standing inside near the fireplace.

"It is high time," she said cheerily, "that Monsieur de Longueuil sent you to the infirmary. Here is a bed and a hot tisane for you. Come in immediately."

"Jeanne, it is wrong of you to use that leg to walk—"

"Tiens! Would you have me run about on one leg and both hands then?"

"It is no matter for jesting—"

"Look at this sick man," she cried wrathfully, "who thinks never of himself but always of me. Will you go instantly and get into your bunk, Monsieur?"

She came, limping a little, to take my hand and draw me toward the bunk adjoining hers.

"Take off your hunting shirt and leggins," she said.

"Come; you need not blush or hesitate," she added gaily,

"as every privacy between you and me seems to have vanished since you turned physician. Allons! It's my turn now!" She cast a clean blanket over my shoulders. "Hasten, mon enfant, and undress; because I mean to give you a bath."

Waves of fever alternating with chills turned me dizzy. She limped to the open fire and began to pour the hot tisane from the kettle into a beechen bowl.

I leaned feebly against the wall, drew off my filthy hunting shirt, my leggins, wrapped me in the blanket and crept into bed. When I lay down I realized I was quite ill.

Presently Jeanne came to offer me the steaming drink. It scalded, but she held the bowl until, little by little, I had swallowed all.

Lying swathed in the blanket I looked at her out of fevered eyes; and she smiled at me, seated on the bunk's edge, her little hands clasped in her lap.

"At last," said she, "I have you where I have long wanted you, Monsieur—at my tender mercy. But I shall not use you as you once used me!" She laughed. "Longueuil says that dead men are no good to him, and that he wishes me to keep you alive by keeping you in bed."

"What I have," said I, "is only a cold which will pass—"

"It will pass—or *you* will, my poor Dick! Come, then; I have bear's grease, hot stones, and a hot poultice from the fort's pharmacy. But first I must bathe you—"

"For God's sake, Madame—"

But she had her way, and washed my head and face and neck and bathed me with hot, wet rags, murmuring under her breath:

"My poor Dick—oh, Mother of God, he is all over blood and dirt—my poor, sick child—and his legs and feet all torn and bruised and blistered—"

A shadow darkened the door, and the little Indian girl appeared with a jug of steaming water.

"Come here!" called Jeanne. "Look; this is the way to wash him. Tenderly; very gently. You understand? Then bathe his body all over—and see that the water be not too hot—"

She rose, limped to the fire, and, crouching there, and using two sticks of wood, she rolled some hot stones into squares of buckskin, tied them, carried them to my bed, and placed them against my feet.

"There," she crooned, and "there—there." Then, on my fevered body, she spread hazel and balsam where the raw or bruised flesh had been washed. Either the fever or the tisane were making me drunk and mindless; for I began to see visions, and I thought I lay in hell-fire and only her two hands cooled me.

Still, through dreams and distorted fancies, her voice came to me, tender, caressing. And after a while there seemed to be others there;—Nick, who lifted me sometimes,—and Longueuil's troubled face. . . . I remember hearing somebody speak of smallpox, too. . . . But what troubled me were the continuous sounds of battle—the incessant musketry and trampling of men and horses—like the uproar of Chamilly's Cavalry. And always, through it all, the incessant, sustained yelling of the Iroquois—

Chapter XLIII

WHEN I came to my senses I was very weak. I remember that the first thing I saw was a blazing fire of logs in the fireplace.

It was that day—or perhaps the next—when I noticed Jeanne Hérouard. She was on a low stool by the fire, tilting a sauce pan. I smelled broth. I tried to call to her; my voice was very feeble, but I spoke her name.

She rose and came swiftly—no longer limping.

The next day—or the next, perhaps—I sat up and drank my broth while she held the bowl.

When I was satisfied she placed a buckskin pillow for me.

“I must mend quickly,” I whispered, “because every man is most urgently required for the firing platform.”

She smiled and shook her head very gently. “No need to fret,” she said; “the soldiers from Fort Roland now garrison our fort.”

“When did they come?”

“Four weeks ago—my poor Dick.”

“Have I been here a month?” I whispered.

“More. . . . You shall not concern yourself with such things yet—”

“Tell me, Jeanne!”

“All is well. . . . We thought you had taken the small-pox. What you had was worse, perhaps—such dreadful humours—such burning fever—and could not breathe. . . . Well, it was in God’s hands—for I knew nothing how to serve you—only that blind and frightened skill which—which love inspires. . . . Lie still, my poor friend. . . . Is it my hands you want? . . . Or—this?—”

She bent nearer and rested her lips on my forehead—drew back a little, looking into my sunken eyes, then swiftly touched her fresh, cool mouth to mine.

"There," said she, "we're prettily damned now—though God sees I mean it only as a change of medicine to hasten you to health—" She laughed and caught my bony hands and hugged them to her, cradling and caressing them against her breast.

"Did Denonville come?"

"Not he. None has stirred yet from Montreal. The country is paralyzed. Such a horror broods over all that nothing has been done; nothing attempted. All is ruin around us. The whole land for miles and miles is a blackened and bloody waste. . . . I can't speak of it. Let Nick o' the Woods tell you. . . . Dick!—I stood on the parapet of the fort and saw our poor people gathered on the strand and looking across the water to Châteaugai where hundreds of fires burned! Oh, God—the savages were burning men and women and little children alive—the wives and sons and daughters of the wretched peasants who could only stand and stare in silent agony across the water—"

She shivered and pressed my hands and kissed them with trembling lips:

"Hundreds of our miserable people lay dead and mutilated among the endless devastation of La Chine.

"Oh, Dick, it was horrible when the Iroquois left! They embarked in their canoes with hundreds of prisoners, giving a frightful yell for each captive, to show us how many they had taken. And when their vast fleet of canoes passed our forts we could hear them shouting: 'Onontio, you oncè deceived us; but now we have deceived you!'"

"Have the Iroquois gone?"

"Many have. Others still roam the burned villages and prowl through our woods. Nobody dares go outside the forts. Denonville seems stunned. Montreal keeps within

her walls in terror. All garrisons remain within the forts under strictest orders. A few of the poor people wander about their ruined houses, but all return to Fort Roland before sunset."

"Damnation," I said hoarsely, "I would give my head if Frontenac were here!"

"Be less prodigal with that poor head," said she with a faint smile, "for I need it, and in no pot of basil, either."

I lay thinking for a while; but could not bring myself to ask her the question.

"Is Nick here?" I asked.

"Yes—" She rose and went out. After a few minutes Nick o' the Woods came in alone.

"Bien!" said he with emphasis,—“and now that you have spewed up heart and liver and are rid o' both lungs, you feel better!"

He took my lifeless and waxen hand in his:

"Ah," said he, "you will take the warpath with me to-morrow. Certainly! Despite our frightened folk in Montreal! Yes!"

"Nick, did Grignon win through?"

"I think he did, damn him."

"Have you any certain word?"

"No. Denonville keeps us cooped like chickens. What is he thinking! He has enough regulars and militia here, now, to drive the entire Iroquois Confederacy into the river."

He stood pulling at his pointed chin and looking down at me.

"Not that I wish to underrate these human tigers," he said. "No. They are the most ferocious creatures ever made by God.

"Do you know what happened at La Présentation? No? Well, one evening they discovered three drunken Iroquois in a cellar, and locked them in. But when they went next

morning to make them prisoners these devils fought tooth and claw so furiously that a company of regulars had to come and shoot them down! There's your Iroquois for you."

"Is the damage they have done very terrible, Nick?"

"It is utter annihilation. For miles around us all is in ruins and the people butchered. . . . I tell you it is the work of hell itself. I think that is what stuns Denonville. He really thinks he has to do with devils. Otherwise, why does he sit like a wooden image behind the ramparts of Montreal? He is a brave man. What is the matter with him? I don't know. But I would give my right hand for Frontenac in this awful hour!"

Presently I asked him what had become of the Loup whom I had locked in the guard house the day I was taken ill.

"He was an Onondaga Iroquois spy," said Nick, "the impudent dog!"

"You hanged him?"

"No; Longueuil delivered him to the Mission Indians. None is more cruel and ingenious, you know. I wasn't there. I heard what they did to him. They were at him for hours and hours. I don't know how they kept him alive. They said there was not a human feature left to recognize—nothing but a scorched trunk and a head with a hideous hole where the face was. . . . And yet they did not let him die; and he gasped his taunts at them till they cut out his tongue and lips. . . . And there's another Iroquois for you. Tenacious of life as tree-cats. Devils every one. But dauntless to the end. They are real men. Damn them, I salute them!"

The recital of endless wickedness wearied me. I lay silent for a while, then closed my eyes. I heard Nick go away on tip-toe. After a time I felt a cool, soft hand touch mine with infinite tenderness.

Chapter XLIV

ONE day before I was yet able to leave my bed the tall, powerful figure of Le Moyne de Longueuil darkened the sunny doorway.

Jeanne Hérouard who, on a low stool by the blazing fire, had been mending a ragged shift for herself, poor child, rose and made him a curtsey such as is seen nowhere except at Versailles.

The huge seignior, fur cap in hand, strode forward in his stringy, blackened buckskins to kiss her hand.

"Madame," he said, "it remains a never ending grief and mortification to me that I am unable to do you honour by presenting myself in fitting apparel."

She laughed and held up her ragged chemise: "Yours is magnificence itself, Monsieur, compared to the state in which I find myself—"

"Madame," cried Longueuil, "to behold you in that chemise would be like gazing upon a damask rose through morning mist!"

He saluted her finger-tips again with gay respect, came to my bed and stood above me. I gave him my hand.

"Hah!" he cried, "is it tomorrow we take the warpath, you and I, Stanhope?"

"Probably the day after," remarked Jeanne with smiling irony.

Longueuil seated himself, and the bunk creaked under his weight.

"There is news," he said. "A black-robe came through."

We saw by his scowling brow that the news was not good.

"No; it is not good news," he said; "there has been a

revolution in England; the Protestant William of Orange is King; France loses an ally in her time of need; our King has declared war on England!"

After a silence Jeanne said quietly: "That is not well for Canada. The Iroquois have nearly ruined us; we shall now have the English at the gates of Quebec."

"That is what I fear, Madame," growled Longueuil; "Cromwell's old Puritans of Massachusetts Bay; the pirates' allies of New York; the Albany Dutch pig-heads will all come a-marching northward, now, bringing with them their Mohawk and Oneida tigers to tear us all to pieces."

Jeanne had ceased her sewing. She asked quietly if the Jesuit had brought news of Denonville."

"Yes, Madame," replied Longueuil grimly, "our pious Marquis has been recalled to France."

I managed to sit up in bed in my excitement: "Who comes to replace Denonville?" I demanded.

"Frontenac!" cried Longueuil, "God has pitied us in the eleventh hour!"

Jeanne rose, came to my bedside, seated herself and took my hands into hers. I saw her starting tears and her lovely mouth twitching in silence.

My voice was husky with emotion; I cleared it and asked when the Count was to land.

"He may land any day, now," said Longueuil. "It is known at Quebec and at Three Rivers; and it heartens everybody—except that holy jackass, Champigny, and a few Jesuits."

"Have the Iroquois gone, Monsieur de Longueuil?" asked Jeanne.

"No, Madame, not all of them. And what a disgrace! But that will soon be wiped out, now. Can you fancy Count Frontenac leaving a single one of the hobgoblins in Canada?"

He rose, growling; he kissed Jeanne's hands and pressed mine:

"Courage, and the warpath tomorrow," he muttered; "and I care not where I go as long as I am rid of this miserable fort."

By the first of October I was walking about everywhere, very thin and somewhat weak, yet, but mending very rapidly under Jeanne Hérouard's care and stimulated by the news of Frontenac's approach, ready to take the warpath when Denonville let us loose.

One morning I asked Longueuil whether there was, yet, any certain news of Grignon.

"Yes," he said, scowling, "and I am heartily sorry for you and for Madame la Comtesse de Palladine, because I know you two are in love; and I supposed that Grignon was finished."

I felt myself reddening: "He is alive, then?" I said.

"Quite. . . . Well, then, the last of the Iroquois took to their canoes this morning before you were awake. They made vulgar and indecent gestures at us while passing the forts. One of them shot an arrow at us. It fell not far from the gate, and our soldiers noticed that there was a letter wrapped around it, and they went out and fetched it to me.

"I read it. One of their half-breeds from Schenectady must have written it. There is a plague spot to wipe out when Count Frontenac arrives—"

He fished the soiled letter out of his wallet and handed it to me: "We shall have to go after the dirty swine, I suppose," he added.

I unrolled the filthy scrap of paper-birch and read:

TO THE CHIEF AT FORT RÉMY:

We have taken all the scalps we need. We have drunk enough French blood. More would make us vomit.

Therefore, we tie your chief witch-doctor and his horse to a tree and leave him for you to rescue so that he may continue to hunt heretics among you and hang them to amuse the French King.

When you find him, ask him why the Iroquois have treated him with so much honour and have left him in good health to be discovered and cherished by you dogs of Frenchmen.

He awaits you under a great red oak where the little brook which crosses the Montreal road enters a tamarack swamp and splits into three branches.

We spit upon you. This is all we have to say to you.

SAHIONA OF TEKAKWITHA.

I handed the insulting letter to Longueuil, who dropped it into his wallet.

"You will send a party at once to his rescue," I said.

"We can stop en route and untie him," he remarked indifferently.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that there is a Saguenay runner in from Montreal. Denonville leaves with his guards for Quebec and he orders our garrison to march at once to reinforce the troops at Montreal. . . . I am going to order the drums to beat at once. Will you be kind enough to inform Madame de Palladine?"

"Yes," said I sullenly.

He laid his great hand on my shoulder: "I'm sorry, Stanhope; I know you love each other. Patience. God will yet give you an opportunity to kill him."

"His mission forbids duelling," said I.

"Well, then, perhaps I'll knock him in the head some day," he remarked carelessly; "I'm sometimes absent-minded, Stanhope, and hit what annoys me—"

He went out abruptly; and, while I was telling Jeanne Hérouard that we were to march immediately to Montreal,

we heard the drums of the regulars begin to beat the assembly on the parade.

I did not speak to her of her husband. She never had mentioned him since he had abandoned her. It was like to be a miserable meeting between them. I did not care to witness it.

She seemed strangely indifferent about leaving, and, while I was making a single pack of our few possessions, I noticed how sombre, and even sad, was her face.

When I had hoisted the pack upon my shoulders and strapped ammunition and weapons to my person, I took my gun and went to her where she stood on the threshold looking back into this little room of logs where we had lived so long and innocently together.

She was so slender, so fair, standing there holding in one hand a packet of her little personal effects tied in a blue peasant's handkerchief, that she looked to be no more than a tall child.

But when I came to her she pressed close to me and her lips met mine in all the fierce passion of possession.

"It is cruel to leave this place where I have watched and cared for you—listened to your breathing all night long, fed you, bathed you like a little boy—it is hard to go and know it is all ended."

I found no word to comfort her or myself, knowing what I knew concerning Grignon.

The drums were beating a march, now. Jeanne Hérouard wiped her eyes on her sleeve, placed her hand within my arm; and we went out to the parade and made our way to the centre of the column where four grenadiers had been told off to escort the young Countess Palladine.

Already our column was marching out commanded by a lieutenant of regulars, and led by Longueuil and Nick o' the Woods in his scarlet cock's-cap, who were followed by a dozen Coureurs-de-Bois and all our Indians.

The lieutenant wanted our drums to continue beating a march, but Longueuil stopped that and threw far forward his advanced guards and flankers.

I said to Jeanne that I must go forward. She smiled tearfully and pressed my hand; and I ran out ahead of the regulars and joined Nick who was leading some forest-runners out into the woods on our right flank.

As I joined him we plunged into the forest.

"I am wondering," he growled, "whether all the vermin really have departed. I admit I am so nervous that I see Iroquois head-feathers whenever a bluejay hops on a hazel-bush."

For three miles or more we advanced amid the October woods where light filtered through gold and crimson foliage like sunshine piercing painted windows of a church.

Ahead I saw tamaracks, turned yellow, but the needles not yet fallen. At the same instant Longueuil came running up to us.

"Hereabouts," said he, "we should discover and release his Majesty's Special Commissioner, Monsieur the Count de Grignon de what's-his-name. Attention! and find this—" His voice dwindled to an indistinct rumble charged with intricate injuries.

Nick, who seemed to know about the matter, gave him a sour look and spat upon the dead leaves; nor did the two Coureurs-de-Bois evince any particular pleasure at the prospect of releasing this noble gentleman whose dastardly flight from the fort had become notorious.

"If he is tied up he should be howling; but I hear nothing save his relatives, the squirrels, jays, and crows," remarked Nick.

I told Longueuil that I had no desire to discover Monsieur the Count; and, therefore, left it to him and his forest-runners.

"Spread out there," he cried to the Coureurs-de-Bois.

"We comb the oak woods north of where the brook divides."

"See to it you do no calling aloud, and no whistling," added Longueuil, "unless you wish to stir up some hobgoblin and have him drop out of some tree upon your back. Get ahead, now!"

As they started, two Indians joined us—a Saguenay from Sillery, and a naked and gaudily painted Dakotah whose oiled and shaven head bore a very cataract of tumbled red feathers.

As he glided past me his brutal, pagan features relaxed to an agreeable grin.

"Etoh!" he said, with a polite gesture of his war-hatchet. "What is bound up in the sheaf has first been reaped. My elder brother will laugh at this Cayuga jest. Kitci okima, ki papimin!—we shall have a good laugh together, O chief!"

Chapter XLV

WHEN I came to the brook I stood for a moment on the wet gravel where water slid darkling under overhanging banks deep with moss. I watched black, snaky little troutlings wriggle over shoals in startled flight; a spectral heron spread vast and ghostly wings and flapped noiselessly away through the woodland gloom.

There was not a sound in the forest save for the ceaseless whining of small, grey, restless birds creeping up and down tree trunks.

As I continued my course forward, I listened, but heard no footfall, no rustling where our Coureurs-de-Bois and Mission Indians were threading the woods through the perpetual forest twilight.

The brook twisted back upon itself like a hangman's noose, and I came to a ridge where it split against the hard bank and made three rivulets through a glade of juniper, shoulder deep.

Then I saw the Isanti standing very near me, shaking the scarlet feathers on his head as a red cock shakes his plumage ere he crows.

As I waded through the juniper to his side he laid a heavy, trembling hand upon my shoulder:

"Laugh if you can," he said in a voice made small and hoarse by fright, "for I have lied to you, O my elder brother, and I can not laugh at this jest of the Iroquois!"

"What jest?" I demanded.

"Look at the great oak yonder!"

I discovered, presently, what he pointed at, but could not

make it out in the dim light; and we two moved toward it slowly,—I with the dreadful reluctance of premonition; he shaking and shivering all over his sinewy, painted body.

There it was, under the red oak, in all its horror—the unclean, yellowing skeleton of a man astride the festering skeleton of a horse.

There was a stench, and everywhere a ceaseless, sinister humming of flies. They rose in swarms from the forest floor where scattered and rotting lumps of human flesh lay about.

“Look,” chattered the Isanti, “they have tied the bones together as the Hereckenes wove their armour with cylinders of hard wood and sinews. . . . Horse and man they have knitted together and made to stand in their naked bones!”

I looked with sickened eyes at the grinning, fly-covered skull to which blackened shreds of meat still clung; I looked at the empty ribs; the dangling leg-bones; at the ghastly horse’s skull which seemed to laugh at the jest—this Iroquois jest that froze voice and blood within us.

Presently I felt the Indian’s clutch tighten on my arm:

“See the charred stake yonder where he suffered. . . . Such a little pile of ashes! They were all day, all night, and another day burning him before he died. They would not let him die. They were at him all that time—never leaving him for a moment. . . . I do not believe he sang his death-song.” He pointed to the ragged, filthy moccasins which they had tied to the skeleton’s feet. They were *women’s* moccasins.

“They made a woman of him,” chattered the trembling savage. “He screamed and wept and made them laugh. . . . Look; what is that birch bark tied to the stake, O my white chief?”

I did not want to go across the glade and read it; but I went.

On the bark was written by the same hand that wrote the arrow-scroll:

The black-robcs have one kind of God; the English another. We have baptized this man with melted lead and sent him to inquire which God is greatest.

Through horrible, whirling clouds of green flies we stumbled out of that awful and stinking place of death. And when, at length, I met Longueuil, he asked me what had happened that I wore a face like death's own visage.

"Death," said I, "is what has happened. Yonder sits Grignon in his bones upon Death's own nag. Let those help bury him who have stronger stomachs than I."

When, a few hours later, our soldiers, Indians and scouts marched into Montreal, drums beating a march, we passed through dense crowds of pallid people who never spoke at all. Dumb, stunned, miserable, their heavy, suffering eyes regarded us stupidly as we marched past convent and church, and into the barracks of the great fortified mill.

Denonville, his terrified wife—Madame la Gouvernante—his daughter, and his horsemen had gone to Three Rivers, but were coming back, they said. All Montreal knew of the Governor's recall and of the expected arrival of Count Frontenac. But so weary with horrors, so exhausted by fear were these unhappy people that there remained in them only the apathy of suffering, and no longer any courage.

Longueuil had told Jeanne Hérouard of Count Grignon's death—nothing of the horrid details—but merely informed her that her husband had been discovered lying dead in the woods not far from Montreal.

I did not go to her. Longueuil told me that her face became pale and expressionless after he had delivered to her the news; that she merely had thanked him and re-

quested that Count Grignon's body be carried to Montreal and there coffined, and candles lighted, and the casket set before the altar in the chapel of the Fathers of Saint Sulpice. Which was done.

The Governor of Montreal offered a suite in his Château to the Countess Palladine; but Jeanne preferred the small convent of the Récollettes, and sent word to me that she was there, and would not receive me for the present.

Longueuil and I shared a chamber in the officers' quarters of the Mill barracks. And from there, the next day, heard the muffled drums for Count Grignon passing down the street, and saw the regulars and militia march out with slow and cadenced step to the dull dirge of double drum-beat and shrilling wail of fife.

They say the clergy, and the Governor and his guards made a solemn and imposing procession of that last journey of Count Grignon. Brave La Hontan, the heretic, with whom Grignon had not dared to meddle, rode his horse tranquilly beside the Governor; and none seemed to remark that irony. So, amid the thick smoke of candles and swinging censer, and the chanting of the cowled Fathers of Saint Sulpice, Commissioner Count Grignon proceeded on his last mission to investigate and report upon the orthodoxy of Almighty God.

Well, Mary pity such as are born into this fierce world without courage to face the ferocity of man; and the enduring mercy of the Most High.

Boom! They were firing minute guns for Count Grignon from the citadel of Montreal. I do not know if kettle-drums were saluting him in Heaven.

Boom! . . . Boom! Perhaps, lurking among the blood-fouled ruins of Châteaugai, across the water, some prowling Iroquois heard those solemn guns.

But he had had his jest with Count Grignon, and, no doubt, was satisfied to prowl in fierce and satiated silence

while the dead wandered on into the Unknown to find out which God really was greatest, after all.

Bell and book, cross and candle; stink of burning tallow and vanilla bean; rin-tin-tin-dingle-dingle; the fresh autumn odour of raw and consecrated ground. . . . Wild geese passing high overhead.

Surcease of worrying concerning saint and heretic. All solved. All pardoned.

At evening, a few stars in a frosted sky; and a little note from Jeanne Hérouard fetched to me from the convent of the Récollette Sisters by an aged gardener with a lantern. An old, old man and his rheumatism. Grateful for a piece of minted silver. . . .

MONSIEUR,

I ask a week in this blessed retreat for meditation and for prayer. May it please you to grant this?

JEANNE HÉROUARD.

I wrote my answer by a soldiers' tallow dip:

MADAME,

That you *ask*, and do not *take* without any thought of him to whom your slightest wish is absolute command, fills me with tenderness and respect born of deathless gratitude and devotion.

I remain always in your service, honoured by your commands, awaiting only the supreme happiness of placing my life at your disposal.

With every respect and obligation in the world, I beg the privilege of remaining, Madame,

Your very humble servitor,

RICHARD STANHOPE.

It did not occur to me that I wrote extravagantly or with word and phrase more stilted and pompous than the occasion demanded. I strove only to suppress with decency my happiness which would be more properly expressed when the shadow of tragedy had passed away.

During her seclusion, I made preparation for our departure.

I had credit in Montreal and no need of anybody to vouch for me.

I purchased a canoe with poles and paddles; provisioned it, renewed my stock of ammunition; and commanded of a tailoress a new woman's dress of buckskin with moccasins—the finest she could make—and a good, stout deerskin hunting shirt and moccasins for myself—all to be ready within the week.

Longueuil, the Northern giant, remained in Montreal with two of his tall, handsome, hardy sons who commanded each a company in a battalion of côte militia. Nick o' the Woods desired to return to Quebec with me, remarking that his eyes had been crossed while looking for courage in Denonville, and he wished to cure the squint by a glimpse of Frontenac.

"I shall sit up like a young catamount upon the top of Diamond Rock," said he, "and squall for my sire; and when I see the old tiger come a-sailing up the river in his tall ship, then shall I sing such a panther song as never yet has been heard in all the wildernesses of the world."

That evening he asked me very politely if I would do him the honour of getting drunk with him.

"No, Nick," said I, quite shocked.

"And why not?"

"Because I am to be affianced to a great lady, Nick, and all such worldly irregularities are ended for me."

"A great lady," he grunted. "That's serious. That's very serious, because I see I shall lose a comrade."

"No, Nick, you gain one."

"Who, then?"

"She."

"What! A great lady make a friend of Nick o' the Woods?" He darted a sharp look at me: "Do you mean Madame la Comtesse de Palladine?"

"I do. You and I are to carry her to Quebec in our canoe."

He scratched his head. "I wonder," said he, "why I had not suspected that. Perhaps because you have been kind enough to make me forget that you, also, are of noble birth."

"Nick," said I, "when one gazes upon these giant trees born of some acorn long before the proudest family in France had taken arms and name, then one's heart grows very humble, and pride of birth becomes a pitiable jest."

"Nevertheless," growled Nick, "it was an acorn out of which your race was sprouted. But I came from some immemorial cocklebur or tare. . . . Weeds breed weeds; oaks breed oaks; and none should forget it who are sheltered by their shade."

"Come," said I, laughing, "we talk of vegetation who are human and thirsty; and I think a jack or two of Montreal ale might dissolve our perplexities and doubts."

We drank together in my quarters, merrily, but in moderation, that evening; and Nick fiddled and we both sang seemly songs of mirth, and very innocent; such as the song called "Ma'mzelle Minoose"—

*I had a little kitten
Who grew to be a cat
And-very soon was smitten
With a passion for a lynx—
Oh, Maman, think of that!
Oh, Maman, think of that!*

*The wayward little minx
Got married to the lynx,
And when they had a kitten-child
It grew to be a tree-cat wild,
With cruel claws on every patte—
Oh, Maman, think of that!
Oh, Maman, think of that!*

Le Moyne de Longueuil strode in to learn what all the noise was about. But I commanded another jack of ale and made him drink; and very soon he, too, was roaring out:

*Oh, Maman, think of that!
Oh, Maman, think of that!*

I was not well next morning, and I know not where I got me such a hellish headache. God heard us join in song, and He knows the songs we sang were very innocent.

Walking by the Récollettes' garden at sundown, to ease my aching head, I spied a slender shape in novice-white moving slowly amid blighted blossoms and dead leaves.

I hastened on as though I had come all unaware upon a privacy.

Chapter XLVI

“**A**U large!” cried Nick o’ the Woods; “boutez en avant! Hai-ya! Hai-ya! Tho! Niha!”

Jeanne Hérouard, a slender, supple figure in her brilliant Indian dress, sat up very straight and excited in the centre of the canoe as it shot out into the silver current of the St. Lawrence.

“Etho! Niha!” shouted Nick, his wet bow-paddle glittering gold in the rays of the rising sun.

“Sathi!” he cried, “look out!” My broad paddle swept deeply astern as we rounded the sunken reef. Then I turned and looked up at Montreal—a silent city swimming in purple shadow, the topmost turret of its citadel tipped with flame.

Then I took off my cap of otter and saluted the western fortress:

“Onen: Io!”

“Io Monia!” murmured Jeanne Hérouard, “Montreal, adieu!”

The côte was aglow with the crimson and russet-gold of maples;—veins of fire threading the sombre pines.

Steam rose from the curling, crystal waves as the sun mounted; clattering flight of startled water-fowl left roaring ripples in their wake.

Clang-clang!—overhead swept wedges of wild geese headed south; “Hiou-hiou!” called the wild swans while their vast, snowy pinions fanned the upper air-lanes.

Nothing else living to be seen or heard in air, on land or water; not a sail, not the tinkle of a cow-bell. Silent the world in its lonely, lovely savagery; the river ran a

waste of tarnished silver clotted with rising fog; pine tops turned golden-bronze; the misty maples' crests caught fire, pricking with myriad flames the morning sky.

"Steer always beyond gunshot," said Nick carelessly, "and God and the tide will carry us safe to the blessed Rock!"

Plying his bow-paddle he lifted his resonant voice in the song called "Endaian," which means, "Where I live."

*"Long have I loved thee, fair Quebec,
Thy slender spires and silver bells,
Thy pretty pastures, rocks and fells,
Thy meadows which the angels deck
With blue-bells in a thousand dells;
Long have I loved my Mountain Town
Where the Twin Mountains tumble down—
Te-kia-tonta-ri-kion!"*

It takes, sometimes, three weeks to journey by water from Quebec to Montreal. But from Montreal to Quebec is down stream and does not require many days of paddling.

Our flying camps, at sunset, we made always on the north shore, fearing the southern seigniories.

Sometimes an anxious parish priest gave us shelter in the fortified farm of some quiet hamlet; sometimes we encamped upon the shore, built our fire, lay in our blankets, and listened to the owls.

Side by side with Jeanne Hérouard I lay, her hand in mine, our stockinged feet toward the embers; and talked of the New World and the Old and of Frontenac and of the new Apocalypse wherein, God willing, all former things should pass away.

Under the sighing pines we spoke together where the moon's creamy lustre transfigured her quiet face and made angelic each lovely, mortal feature so that I seemed to see her in the spirit.

Under the midday skies we spoke together where warm brightness flushed each charming feature of her flower-like face, so that I thought to see a wild rose opening in the sun.

And our philosophy?

"Love," said she, "is a strange seed which I think drifts earthward out of outer space, lodging at random—like those winged seeds of the maple tree.

"Unnoticed, uncultivated, it takes root where it falls. None can account for it, none explain it when it blossoms.

"Upon some soil," said she, "this love-seed falls but once. Upon others, more than one seed lodges; and each, in turn, roots, blooms, dies. . . . Perhaps the parent-tree grows near God's throne. . . ."

Her idle hand lay open, resting on the moss. Within its flower-pink cup I pressed my lips.

She sighed, lightly: "Who would have thought it, after all the cruelties you once practiced on me?"

"A precocious child," said I.

"And brutally beaten for it," said she.

"Darling Jeanne—"

"My adored," she breathed.

Nick, lying asleep, sat bolt upright in his blanket; and instantly Jeanne sat erect and so did I, listening intently. Then Nick looked up at the stars. We looked also.

"Did you hear thunder?" said he. "I know not what awakened me; but the sound was in the ground—like far thunder, or a high cannon fired on Quebec Rock."

He laid his sunburned cheek to the moss: "There! Again!" said he. "Very, very far away to the eastward. . . . Is it the Iroquois, or Frontenac's ship?"

"The ship!" cried Jeanne Hérouard. "God send it!"

The rising sun blazed in our faces as we swept au large through sparkling, steaming waters. We said scarcely a

word. Between my dear mistress and me all silences were ever vibrant with ceaseless interchange. A tender question of the eyes, a touch of fingers ere I took my paddle—and therein had a world of words been said.

Diamond and sapphire set, the sparkling flood curled away in gold-washed snow from our birchen bows, hour after hour through the long October day.

It was nearly sunset when I saw Nick's paddle tossed high and dripping:

"Nai Cap Rouge!" he cried.

There it lay, a purpling cloud far to the eastward under our lee bow.

Perhaps the crimson sun-glare started the tears in my eyes. Swish! Through the water scuttled a score of saw-bill ducks with a ripping, rippling noise; black and white wings clattered into flight; a lengthening line wavered above the waves, glimmered afar; was gone.

"A sail," said Jeanne Hérouard.

It might have been the white breast of a duck, stained rosy in the sunset light, or a white-capped wave along the kindling côte. But it was a sail beating westward toward Cap Rouge.

And when the fisherman sheered past abeam of us he waved his blue wool cap and shouted:

"Count Frontenac's ship is passing the Isle of Orleans! The castle cannon saluted his riding-lights last night off Beaupré côte. Vive Frontenac! Vive la France!"

We tossed our dripping paddles into the air:

"Vive Frontenac!" we shouted. Like some celestial herald's, Jeanne Hérouard's clear young voice rang out across the water:

"Vive la gloire! Death to the Iroquois! Ours Canada, forever, always French!"

Our canoe leaped and bounded and rushed on as we

fairly hurled it forward through the crimsoned waves: Cap Rouge towered high over our port bow; beyond loomed the great grey Rock, spire-crowned, turreted, impregnable.

"The ship!" cried Jeanne.

We saw her now, coming grandly on to her anchorage, streaming with flags and pennants, her swarming decks a mass of moving colour in the afterglow, shot by metallic gleams.

Everywhere canoes, fishing smacks, bateaux, cockle-shells swarmed over the waters washing the quais of the lower town.

Through the gathering twilight we could discover the vast throngs, now, covering streets and docks and wharves where torches blazed and lanterns gleamed.

"Let us land and run for it," I called to Nick, "lest we be too late to see him land!"

I steered for a gravel beach where a white cottage stood; the bottom of our craft grated on the sand; Nick leaped to the shore and drew us in; Jeanne Hérouard followed lightly as a June fawn; I sprang after her. Then Nick and I each took her by a hand and we ran toward Mountain Street just as a boat left the ship.

Suddenly a world of fireworks burst flaming from the upper town and the air roared with rockets.

"If you please, gentlemen," I said, as we came to the torch-lit ranks of soldiers lining the steep ascent, "be good enough to make way for Madame the Countess Palladine!"

They opened their ranks very civilly to us, but stared at the three breathless figures in Indian dress who passed through and hastened along the log-paved acclivity to the upper town between double ranks of regulars.

As we mounted through the brilliant glare of fireworks, I could hear murmurs: "Yonder goes Madame de Palladine whose husband died at La Chine! There is Monsieur de

Stanhope, *Sieur d'Auros!* Look! Here comes Nick o' the Woods in cockscomb scarlet cap!"

Just as we reached the citadel and came out into the streets above all ablaze with bonfires, a vast cheering broke out in the lower town, followed by the thunder of cannon; and we knew that Count Frontenac had landed.

Drums rolled; trumpets pealed; the deafening noise of bells broke out over the city, punctuated by the heavy shock of cannon shots from the bastions. In an unbroken roar the cheering continued, growing louder and nearer as their old Governor, mounting the ascent, saluted his people.

Through the crackling and hissing of fireworks and the approaching uproar from below we caught the clang of steel and the clink of his body-guard's swords and spurs. Suddenly we saw him!

Red light from torches blazed on his burnished corselet of steel; his plumed hat was in his hand; his spurs rang on his buff-boots. In his lion's eyes two little golden flames were dancing, and under his upturned moustache the lion mouth grinned.

"*Merci—merci, mes enfants,*" he was saying as he passed through the ranks of cheering soldiery, "it is a great comfort to see you—a great pleasure to be with you once more."

Behind us a mass of men, women and children were shouting, "*Vive Frontenac!*" He saluted them with a gay gesture of his beloved hand. His guards tramped up to open for him a lane to the Château. As he strode toward it his swift eyes, which never missed anything, saw Jeanne Hérouard, and knew her instantly in her forest dress.

He was a man of seventy; he sprang toward her like a boy of sixteen and took her into his arms.

Around them silence fell as he bent his grizzled head and kissed her on either cheek.

"*Ah, mignonne,*" said he, "this is the best of all!"

"No, Monsieur my cousin," she cried, laughing through tears, "behold the best in the whole world! Mine, Monsieur!—though half his heart is yours—"

"Dick Stanhope!" he roared, "by the flame-winged Angel of Eden!"

Before I could stir I was swept into his arms and held there together with Jeanne Hérouard.

Chapter XLVII

ON the morning of a magnificent October day I married Jeanne Hérouard, Countess Palladine.

I wore my white officer's uniform of the battalion of Côte d'Auros. Jeanne, in gold and primrose, was more beautiful than any heavenly vision.

The civil ceremony took place at the Palace of the surly Intendant, Monsieur Champigny.

Only Count Frontenac, Longueuil, Nick o' the Woods, my housekeeper, Josephine, and the Intendant were present—the latter cold as ice and freezingly polite.

He was, however, sufficiently and formally correct to put himself at the head of his company of light horse and escort us to the Chapel of the Recollet Fathers in the lower town.

Here the religious ceremony was performed; and here Champigny, chilly as his own glittering cuirass, made us his ceremonious compliments and formal adieux; and I was entirely aware that he regretted his inability to hang me from Diamond Rock and exhibit my remains in that rusty iron cage which still stood there near the basket of the beacon.

So he took himself off with his clattering horsemen, to go and bite his nails on the St. Charles and await the return from Montreal of Monsieur Denonville to concoct with him further mischief.

At the Récollets the Governor's troop of horse awaited the end of the ceremony to escort my little Jeanne and me to our house at Auros.

My wife, with Josephine in attendance, drove in a

calèche; Count Frontenac rode on her right; I on her left; the prancing horses of the Governor's guards surrounded us; Nick and Longueuil galloped ahead in all the gaudy magnificence of their forest finery.

At the little whitewashed seigniory, Count Frontenac and I set foot to sod to receive my wife from the calèche.

She was very pale and serious; she gave us each a hand as she descended from the carriage. We led her into the house; Josephine curtsayed and presented the keys; Count Frontenac saluted her hand, then Longueuil kissed it, then Nick, then I.

The wedding feast was to begin at two o'clock. Already I heard the fiddlers tuning up and practicing in the kitchen, and smelled a very savoury soup and appetizing roasts where dishes already had been set a-cooking, and women of my tenantry were running hither and thither with pots and pans and kettles, or sat a-plucking wild ducks and partridges and pigeons; and geese and capons from the market.

When the others had gone out I stood a moment alone with the lovely mistress of my household, retaining her hands.

"Will you be long away from me?" she asked gravely.

"Two hours, I think."

She sighed.

Very seriously we kissed each other, then I went out and got into my saddle, and away we galloped, Count Frontenac and I, and the troop of horse, making a mighty jingling with our equipment and accoutrements in the clear October air.

By the St. Louis and St. John routes a thousand regulars were marching out of Quebec upon the grassy plains beyond the walls, their drums and fifes and clarions making a most impressive and martial racket.

Eight hundred militia were already in rank there—companies and battalions from the côte regiments.

Count Frontenac, shining like a grizzled god in his half

armour and gilded uniform, brilliant ribbons streaming from his shoulders, pulled in his horse with a growl.

"Not a Coureur-de-Bois to be seen!" he said to me. "What that gentry needs is an iron hand to twist their gullets when they turn insubordinate! By the ironshod hoofs of the devil's dam," he cried in increasing anger, "I shall teach the forest-runners to obey my summons or hang every worthless one of them to tame the rest as I tamed Perrot!"

"Monsieur," said I, "there are too many able men among them to be treated in such fashion."

"Damnation and a thousand bishops in hell!" he shouted, "am I to kiss their moccasins who would not do as much for the Pontiff's ring?"

"Damnation yourself, Monsieur," I retorted angrily, "are you forgetting that the Sieur La Salle also is no more than one of these Coureurs-de-Bois whom you would treat so contemptuously! And what was Marquette; and Champlain? And what is Duluth, Nick o' the Woods, Le Moyne and his tall sons,—and, hang it!—what the devil am *I*? A Coureur-de-Bois! Who are to lead the officers who lead your troops unless it be the despised Coureurs-de-Bois, Monsieur?"

For an instant the lion-glare in his eyes dazzled me; then he burst into a roar of laughter:

"Do you remember when you once drew sword on me, Dick? And now give me a dozen thrusts with the tongue! Very well, then; I admit that forest-runners are best caught with sugar. Catch them for me, Dick."

I took off my gilt-bound hat to him and bowed low in my saddle:

"Monseigneur," I said, "you are a very great man and one destined to save our unhappy country."

"Yes," said he with the pleased simplicity of a child, "I know that."

We were riding slowly across the field; his staff, order-

lies, aides-de-camp and escort of horse came galloping up to salute him and fall in behind us. Four field guns and their caissons and a forge came lumbering out of the St. Louis Gate to take part in the inspection; also Champigny's light horse and their chilly-visaged commander, and a battalion of Beupré militia wearing Indian dress.

A vast throng of people were gathering outside the walls of the city; and there were many religious orders there—the Jesuits, Sulpitians, coldly curious; the Recollet Fathers beaming benevolence upon this Governor General whose only friends they were in all this vast religious community.

"My General," said I in a low voice, riding by his side, "now is the time to make peace with the Bishop, with the Sulpitians in their Seigniorship of Montreal, and with those brave, devoted Jesuits who, after all, do their work, with all the honest, fervent conviction which animates you to do yours."

"I can not trust them," he said harshly.

"Try to, Monseigneur. For, to be truly great, is to conciliate and unite, as well as to conquer."

"Hoofs, tails and horns in hell!" he growled, "is this young man teaching me to be a statesman as well as a soldier?"

Then the leonine grin grew under his upturned moustache.

"Do not distress yourself, Dick, for when I vapour and rage most I am devising mildness all the while. Be content; I shall give the accolade to every shave-pate and black-robe in Canada; and no cat sucking up cream shall smile more blandly than I upon Saint-Vallier. No!"

He drew bridle where a horseman sat all alone. The horseman drove the counterpoint of his pennoned lance into the sod.

Count Frontenac's fiery eye swept the long ranks of soldiery, but he was in no hurry.

"Last night," he said, "I arrived. Today I inspect my

troops, I survey my Government, I behold the ruin wrought by—well, by an estimable and pious gentleman who no longer is Governor General—ruin, devastation, negligence, and shame—”

He made a wide and sweeping gesture: “Half the province in ashes; hundreds of our countrymen butchered; the tribes of the Northwest terrified and ready to revolt and join the enemy against us; the tribes to the eastward ready to murder our people from the sea to the Saguenay!

“That is the situation which confronts me when I land—massacre, revolt, cowardice, ignoble terror; the fur trade stopped; the English become a fierce and rebel rabble under this fellow Leisler—ready to march upon us. . . . Dick, have I painted this picture in true colours?”

“Yes, Monseigneur.”

“Hah! Well, then, the remedy. First; Denonville sends a cowardly message to Valrenne to blow up my Fort Frontenac and retreat. Fort Frontenac—the apple of my eye! Hell and a thousand she-demons! . . . Well, I sent an officer and soldiers at daybreak to stop that villainy.”

“Thank God,” I breathed.

“And me,” he added, scowling. “As for the northwestern tribes, I shall send troops to teach them what manner of man I am. They start today. And, concerning the Iroquois and English—it is war. War! No belt-bearers whining for peace go from me to Albany and Onondaga. No! A red belt flung in their faces is my present to those hell-born goblins.”

“Thank God,” I said.

“Well, yes,” he retorted peevishly, “but some little gratitude is due me, too. . . . And if anybody thinks I am going to await war here in Quebec, then they don’t know me. No! Because, while I sat up last night in my bed and could not sleep for devising how to do a mischief to the Iroquois and English, I wrote out on my knees a draft of campaign and

three orders: a war party leaves as soon as ready from Montreal, and strikes at Schenectady and Albany. Another I hurl at Salmon Falls; a third I launch at Pemaquid.

"Then, with a fleet, I take the water in person; my object New York because my King, Louis the Fourteenth, has declared war against the City of New York in particular.

"And if my vessels hold together, and God stays the storms, then I shall sail into the Bay of New York and take that accursed city from whence springs every evil that ruins Canada. Yes, by the jewelled pinions of the flaming archangels, that is my plan of campaign to begin immediately!"

He sat up high in his saddle; drew his long sword and lifted it.

Instantly all officers drew their swords; an outburst of drums and fifes sounded from the infantry; the clarions and trumpets saluted the Governor General of all Canada.

He put his horse into motion, retaining me by his side with a quick gesture; and leisurely we rode along the ranks of soldiery to inspect them. They were not entirely to his liking; a low, continual rumble came from his grim lips as he continued on, and I saw the lurid flare in his tawny eyes.

I had my carnet, and wrote down everything as he growled out to me to note this or that. His lion's eyes sparkled approval or darted flame as this officer or that, responsible for his company, stood motionless at salute.

"Bigre de bougre de ventre Saint Gris," he grumbled when we finished with the Beupré militia, "I see no côte company decently equipped except your own, Dick. Very well. Damnation."

He made his horse pivot; we followed him as he galloped across the plain, whirled his mount, and faced the regiments once more.

"Take them," he growled.

I took off my hat to him, put it on, spurred out in front

of the long line, gave the brief word of command, and put myself at the head of the light horse to the cold annoyance of Monsieur Champigny.

So, drums and music sounding, we passed in review before our Governor, and then the companies, battalions, regiments, troops of horse, and artillery marched away to their several destinations; and Count Frontenac and I rode away to my manor house at Auros.

"Dick," said he in a quiet and pleasant voice, "I am returned to Canada pledged in my secret soul to free this unhappy New World of Iroquois and English alike;—rescue it from Puritan bigotry, the dull brutality of the New Yorker, the meddling fanaticism of our brave black-robes and sullen Sulpitians.

"None shall tyrannize; all shall live as humbly and harmlessly as do our gentle Recollet Fathers. There shall be peace, security, justice for all. And work for all. Which means that the farmer shall mind his business, the fisherman his, the soldier, magistrate, priest, and official his. And none other's. Tyranny ends! Because the business of everybody shall be mine; and I shall tolerate no other opinion—"

He turned to me sharply: "What the devil are you laughing at?" he demanded.

"At the greatest of all autocrats and the most beloved of all tyrants save God alone and Louis the Fourteenth."

"A thousand copper-bottomed dev—"

He checked himself as I began to laugh; then his own bonnie laughter burst roaring from his lion's lips; and we set spurs to our horses and galloped for côte d'Auros.

Chapter XLVIII

NEVER, I think, has there been in the world so noisy a bridal feast, or so gay an uproar made by a company so modest in numbers.

Champigny, though invited, excused himself; but there were officers and their ladies from such seigniories as could be notified, and the Governor's military family; and there was Count Frontenac, and the curé of Auros, and Le Moyne de Longueuil, and Nick o' the Woods. And four fiddles. And such wine from the Governor's ship, just fetched out of France! And such savory soups and roasts of beef and lamb and scores of spits upon which sizzled roasted partridges and bustards and quails and wild pigeons; and there were great casseroles in which capons and other fowl, sweetly browned, swam in their own appetizing juices which smelled deliciously of a score of herbs.

There were ribs and haunches of venison, all a-smoking for the carver; there were trout and salmon and eels done cunningly in every exquisite manner; there were pastries and sweets and spiced puddings and sugar-cakes; there were melons and grapes from the Recollets, apples, pears, lemons and oranges come by the great ship, and a hundred spiced dishes of every possible description made by the Château chief cook and his battalion of assistants from my own seigniory.

We ate, we drank, we sang; the fiddlers fiddled; we danced upon the grass; we danced as we chose, and then returned to table.

We drank the King; we drank the bride; they toasted the bridegroom; we drank our new Governor, his absent Lady;

we drank New France, Quebec, Three Rivers, Montreal. We drank to war—confusion to New York and death to the Iroquois! We drank the army, the navy, the militia. I gave the Coureurs-de-Bois, and Frontenac shouted approval through roars of laughter.

Ah, Mesdames et Messieurs, we were mighty men in those days—mighty with goblet and with trencher; and our habits bred lusty children to succeed us—great strong, ruddy youngsters of bone and sinew and soundest white flesh—where now the mottled, scrawny, sour-bellied Puritan goes a-whining like a starving meat-bird in midwinter, wetting his thin lips with thinnest cider—

Pardon, Mesdames—I continue to write of my young manhood and the golden days of fire, and of the epoch of the Sun Hawk—our Governor of the tawny eyes.

When we toasted his beautiful wife he rose, bowed low, stood erect, and kissed his goblet in homage to that lovely wife who loved him not.

Melancholy swept his face as a dark cloud drifts across a cliff: then came the sun; and he turned and sped a jesting shaft at me which made Jeanne Hérouard turn rosy.

But at such times all are privileged to aim broad shafts of wit at bride and groom, which they must take with blushes or without and show no irritation however broad the shaft.

Frontenac, on her right, teased and plagued her so that I marvelled at her kindness to him and her spirited good humour:

“Ah,” said he, “little kitten, you hunted him like a mouse until you got the poor Loy, after all! Did I not warn him you would get him?”

“So did I, Sir,” she retorted gaily; “and, if I remember, you said, ‘Meow!’”

“Hah! Yes, I did. I said ‘Miau!’ And I meant it. For what does a kitten when finally she hath the wretched mouse between velvet paws?”

"Plays with Monsieur Mouse," said Jeanne. "And so shall I, to his great content, Sir."

"Yes, but the hidden claws?" insisted Frontenac.

"Ah, Monseigneur, did you not know that he clipped them off when"—she placed her lips against Frontenac's ear—"when he spanked me?"

Then those two began to laugh like children—and my sweetheart swayed in her chair suffocating with laughter as Frontenac roared the louder.

"A stick," he cried, "it is the only cure, and lasts only until it breaks and another stick is necessary. Cordieu de corbleu de bigre de bougre! If only every man had the wisdom of your husband, Madame!—"

"My poor Dick," whispered Jeanne, turning to me, her grey eyes moist with mirth, "my poor, poor mouse who ran away across half the world to escape his destiny, and now sits so meekly here between the kitten's velvet paws!"

"Lord," said I, laughing, "is a bridegroom then so pitiable a thing that even the bride derides him?"

"Darling—you seem so—so tamed—"

"I'll remember that, Madame—"

"Darling!—you wouldn't ever punish me *that* way again—would you?" She was laughing; then her eyes softened and her lips grew tremulous and tender: "If ever I am unfortunate enough to displease you," she murmured, "I shall die of my proper grief; and other punishment will be quite useless, Dick."

"My worshipped wife—"

"My husband, honoured and adored—"

"Such love—alack-a-day billing and cooing," shouted Count Frontenac, "is an effrontery and an enormity under every wine-bibbing nose at this table!"

"A penalty!" shouted everybody; "punish him! Punish them both!"

"Certainly," said Frontenac; "the bridegroom shall rise

and, in extemporary verse, admit his unworthiness to untie his bride's garter; and the bride shall reply to him in similar and extemporized strophes! And for every limping line, halting metre, and ill-matched rhyme, each shall be made to empty a goblet of champagne—if we have to carry them to their bed to recover!"

A shout of approval greeted the sentence.

"Oh, Holy Virgin," murmured Jeanne to me, "can you avoid going drunk to bed?"

"I'll try. Can you?"

"God knows. . . . And I beg you will be careful and make no such rhyme as *amour* and *dur*," she whispered.

"Come," cried Frontenac, "quit swapping rhymes, you two! Up upon thy legs, Dick, and fight like a poet or fall like Bacchus!"

For a terrible moment I scourged my brain, then, to gain a wretched second or two, made my bow to my wife as low and slow as possible:

"Madame," said I:

*"Not Aphrodite's sway alone
Has brought me to your pretty feet—
Not Jove upon his golden throne,
Not Hera, wisest ever known,
Nor Hermes' whisper indiscreet
Has led me here across the seas
To kneel before you on my knees;
But, lacking water, fishes die;
And, lacking air, no bird can fly;
And, lacking land, all beasts were dead;
And, lacking thee, my life were sped!"*

"Bravo!" cried Frontenac; "by the rainbow wings of Cupid, he baffles us and Bacchus! Now, Madame, God help you!"

He turned to Jeanne, who rose, became very pink, and made us a bewitching curtsy.

"Monsieur," she said, lifting her grey eyes to mine:

*"Who shall compare to thee on earth?
None my enchanted eyes can see;
None rivals thee in noble worth—
Nor King nor Prince of Kingly birth
Could swerve my loyalty to thee
Who, in a far land, turned aside
To save a child—and found a bride!
My soul I owe to One above;
I owe thee life; I pay with Love;
Yet while I pay my debt divine,
O God, I wonder thou art mine!"*

A tempest of cheers swept the assembly, and Frontenac cried:

"By the fat rump of Bacchus, her wit saves her, and she also goes sober to her bed! Nevertheless, strike up the fiddles, and may the Iroquois eat me if I do not dance once more with loveliest of all on earth—save only one—"

To the fiddlers Jeanne said smilingly: "I pray you play Lulli's 'Danse d'Automne.'" And: "Give me your hand, my cousin," said she, "and I will teach you a measured dance, à deux, I learned at court."

So, gracefully, leisurely, they trod the measure—the old man with the lion's eyes and greying mane; the slim maid-wife with waving fan, whispering behind it some little kindness—a word of praise—some pretty phrase about his wife—the charming wife who loved him not.

Their moon-cast shādows moved with them across the grass. The music flowed like winds through distant pines.

The last guest gone; fiddlers reeling homeward, fiddling

and singing still; the cloth removed and the long board cleaned.

Hurry and bustle and muffled laughter from the kitchen; humble, shadowy figures burdened with savory spoils and clinking bottles retreating across the côte; adieu donc! Go with God! A bientôt, mes amis! Adieu! Adieu!

Josephine at her door, barring it, locking shutters, raking out the hearth. A shuffle of cloth-shod feet. A stillness. The clock ticking. Silence.

At our window above, together, pale shapes in the silvery lustre, motionless, enlaced.

The hunters' moon stared down at us—the white orb of hunters—hunters of men.

"And when the iron-winged birds fly south," she said, "must you, too, go?"

"A great captain has returned to us," I answered; "shall I not aid him to save and make secure this new home of ours?"

"Mother of God," she sighed, "has there not been blood enough—and was the Cross and Thorny Crown in vain?"

"Let the iron birds sleep until they wake and fly," said I. "Meanwhile—we two—"

She sighed, yielding her lips to mine in the fierce lustre of the hunters' moon.

(1)

THE END

